

Huskers Illustrated

Misery in Missouri

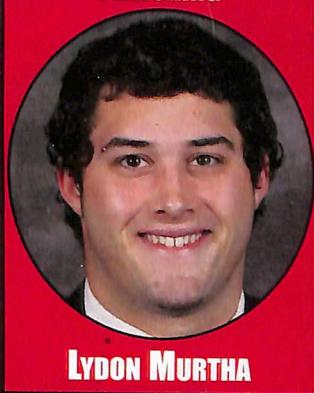
Huskers
have no
answers
for fired-up
Tigers

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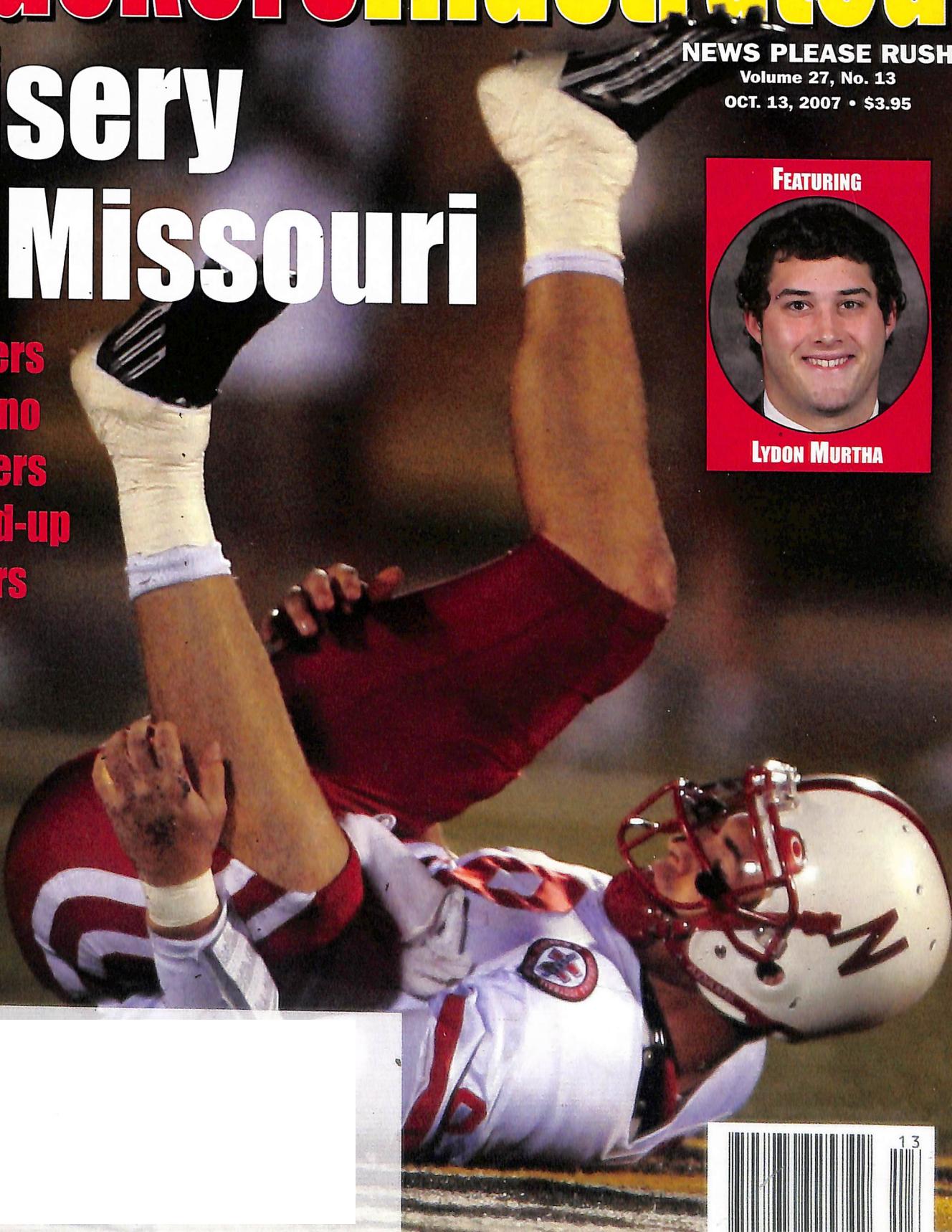
Volume 27, No. 13

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FEATURING



LYDON MURTHA



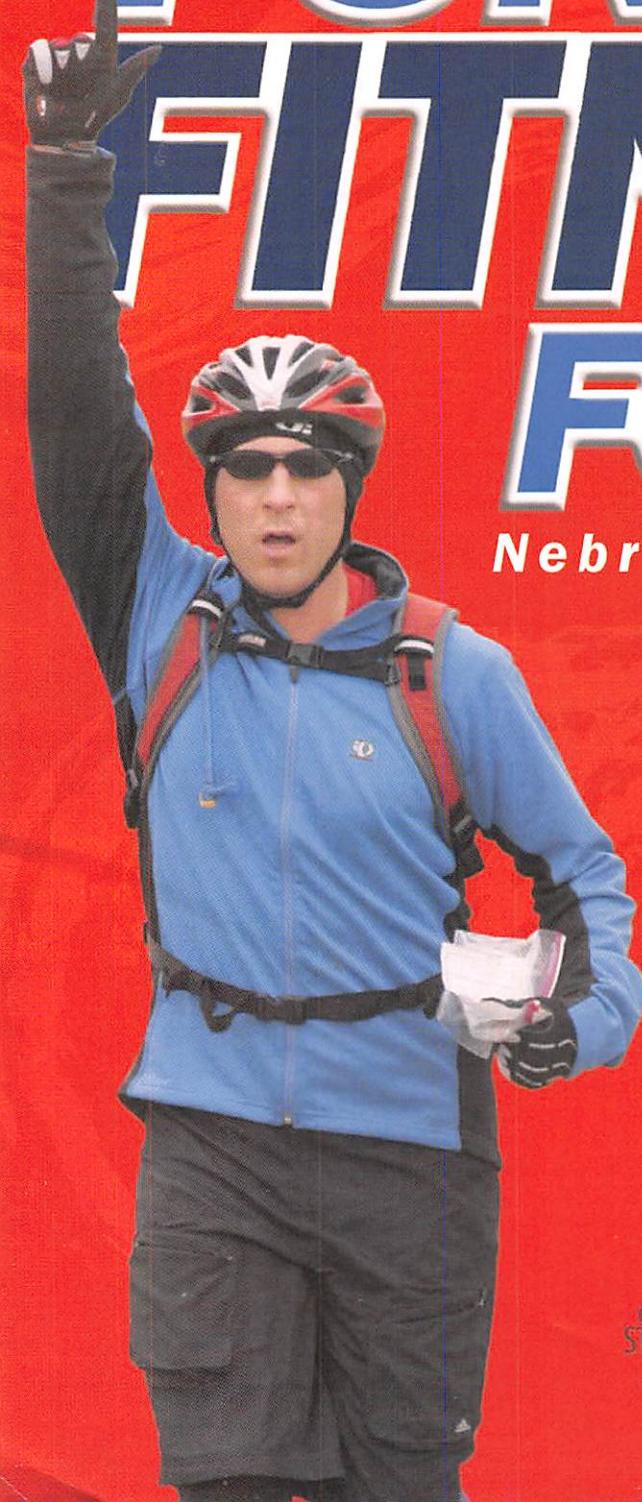


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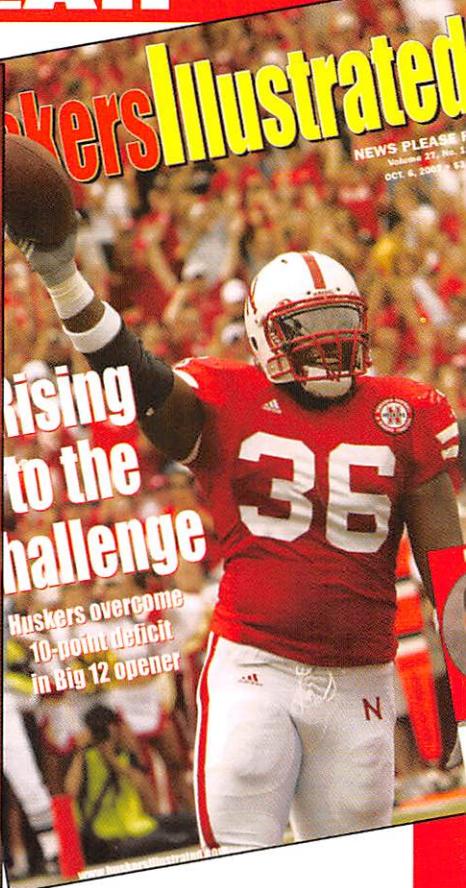
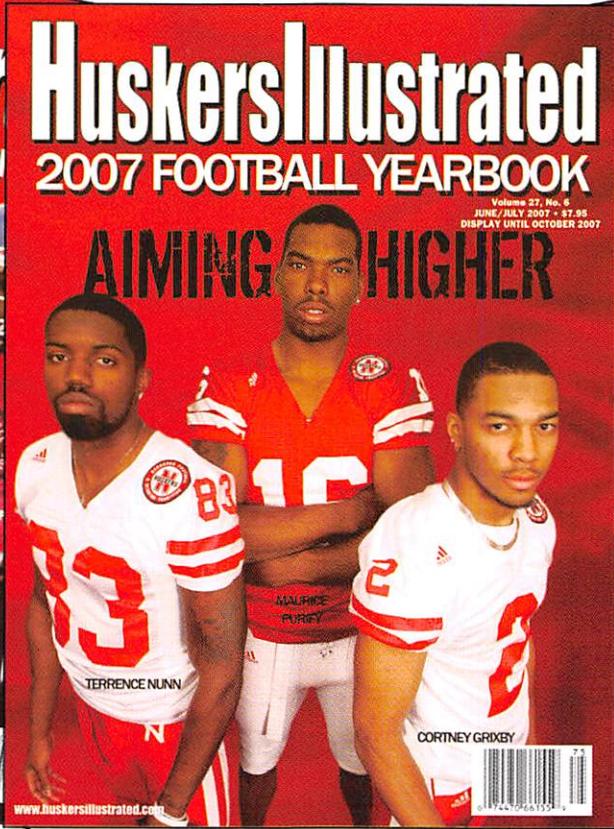
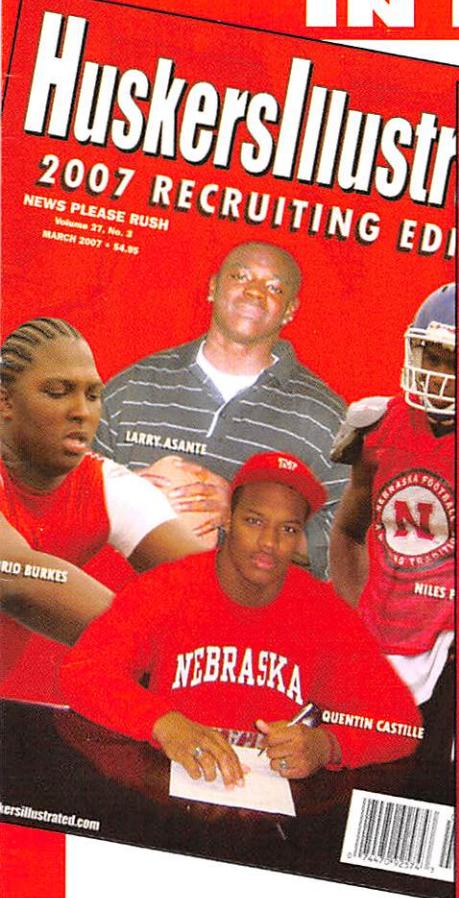


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...All The Time

This One Got Away Early

Husker give up 41 points for third straight time in Columbia



**Brian
HILL**

THE KICKOFF time was moved back to 8:26 p.m. (CDT). When the game finally began, ESPN had audio problems, so the studio team of Rece Davis, Mark May and Lou Holtz provided commentary, instead of Ron Franklin, Ed Cunningham and Jack Arute, who were on the scene in Columbia, Mo.

The audio problems were fixed and the telecast continued, but the picture certainly wasn't a pretty one for Nebraska fans.

The expected offensive show was just that for the host team, confident and raring to go after an off week. Nebraska, meanwhile, never got started.

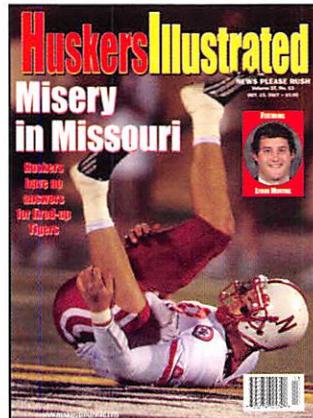
Missouri went 80 yards in 12 plays to score. The Huskers opened with a false start penalty, leading to a three-and-out. The Tigers then went 79 yards in 11 plays. It was already 14-0. Missouri quarterback Chase Daniel was on a roll, and the buzz saw was just getting started before the raucous crowd of 70,049.

Nebraska, which averaged 35.8 points in its first five games, could muster only a pair of Alex Henery field goals and was out-yarded 606-297. The beleaguered Husker defense, on the field for a whopping 102 plays a week earlier against Iowa State, suffered through 85 snaps from Missouri, which averaged 7.1 yards per play. Daniel completed 33-of-47 for a career-best 401 yards.

And a week after getting four

ON THE COVER

Nebraska quarterback Sam Keller is spilled by the Missouri defense. Keller passed for 223 yards, but the Huskers couldn't find the end zone in a 41-6 loss in Columbia, Mo. Cover photo by Scott Bruhn.



turnovers against the Cyclones, NU had no takeaways. The Tigers were very good, and the Huskers were bad.

The 35-point defeat marked the third consecutive time Nebraska has lost by 17 or more points in Columbia. Mizzou defeated the Huskers by scores of 41-24 in both 2003 and 2005. This 41-6 thrashing was the widest margin by Missouri since the Tigers won 47-6 in 1947, MU's largest victory margin in the series.

You can read more about the struggle in Columbia in this edition of Huskers Illustrated. Junior offensive tackle Lydon Murtha is the subject of our feature story, and sophomore safety Larry Asante answers "10 Questions."

While the news wasn't good on the football field, the top-rated Nebraska volleyball team continued to roll, not losing a game through its nine September matches and starting October off the same way. Junior Amanda Gates, an important role player, is the focus of this week's volleyball story.

We've also got a look at basketball walk-on Paul Velder, a three-point specialist, and softball pitcher Molly Hill, who became the second Nebraska pitcher to lead the Big 12 in ERA, finishing at 1.05 last season as a sophomore. "Notebook" leads off with a look at the baseball team's young pitching staff.

While the softball and baseball teams complete their fall practices at their Haymarket Park fields, it's bound to be a tough week to the east in and around Memorial Stadium. By final margin, the 41-6 loss was the worst since the 70-10 debacle at Texas Tech in 2004, Bill Callahan's first year.

At least six games remain, with the next two at home against 3-3 Oklahoma State and 5-1 Texas A&M, followed by tough road games at Texas and Kansas.

If this team is to find its stride, now is the time. ■

Huskers Illustrated

www.huskersillustrated.com

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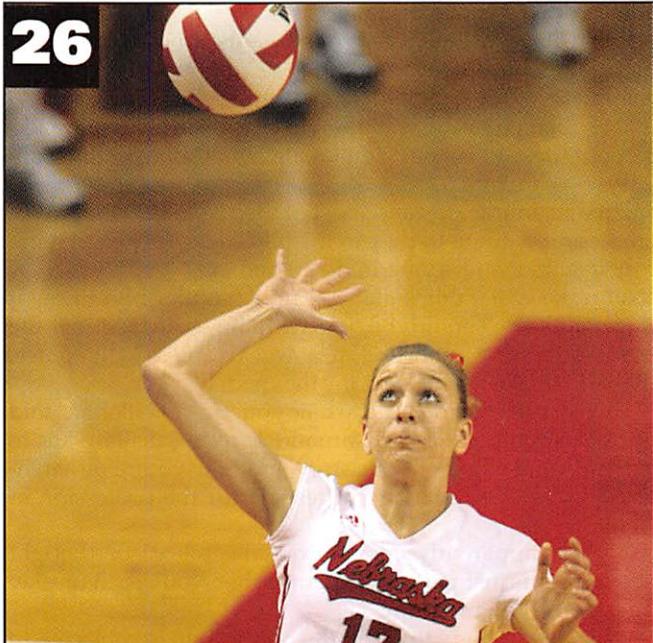
Football, particularly at the major college level, is a "pretty mentally challenging sport," according to Nebraska offensive tackle Lydon Murtha. "We all get uptight. We're on edge. So I just kind of lighten the mood, you know?" *By Mike Babcock*

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STATE OF THE HUSKERS

Growing Divide?

Oklahoma coach says media's approach has taken a negative turn



**Terry
DOUGLASS**

WHILE THE RECENT tirade by Oklahoma State's Mike Gundy made for entertaining TV and sports talk fodder, it also illustrated what appears to be a growing divide between members of the media and major college football coaches.

Prior to the age of the Internet and the 24-hour news cycle, coaches and reporters often had much chummier relationships. For instance, former Oklahoma coach Barry Switzer would occasionally invite media types to his home for a barbecue.

Judging from Gundy's highly publicized blow-up directed at a Daily Oklahoman columnist for her perceived swipes at benched quarterback Bobby Reid — as well as the ensuing reaction of several Big 12 Conference coaches — it seems evident that the division between coaches and the press won't be closing anytime soon.

Oklahoma coach Bob Stoops said he thinks the media's approach to coverage has definitely taken a negative turn.

"I just think there's more sarcasm and belittling or it's who can be more funny in embarrassing or putting someone down," Stoops said. "I find it hard to read the sarcasm in those types of articles."

As was Gundy's contention with the Daily Oklahoman column, Stoops said it's unfair to be harshly critical of student-athletes. While you could argue that college football players are public figures and many of them are on full-ride scholarships and enjoy many benefits that other college students don't, Stoops disagrees.

"Regardless of what anyone wants to say, they're student-athletes, and they're not professional players," Stoops said. "Sometimes, the way they're ridiculed or the way they're writing articles and talking about these kids, they don't realize that some of them are 18, 19, 20 years old."

"They're young kids and most of them — 98, 99 percent of them — aren't going to play in the NFL. They're just playing for their school and trying to do a good job."

Nebraska coach Bill Callahan said it isn't for him to say if college athletes should be individually criticized by the press. Addressing reporters at a weekly press conference, Callahan said he has respect for the media.

"You're professionals at what you do," Callahan told reporters. "You go into each situation pretty calculated as to what you want to get out of a story and how you're researching a story, so I've got a lot of respect for the profession in general."

Callahan apparently comes from the school of thought that criticism is just part of the game when you coach or play for a high-profile program.

"I think everybody that's in the public light is subjected to

criticism — and praise," Callahan said. "Your ability to handle that is really important, and if you let it affect you negatively, you'll have negative effects."

Learning to deal with criticism, Callahan said, is an important life skill.

"That's a good life lesson that will only help them down the line when they graduate from the University and go on in their own life," Callahan said. "We all deal with those pressures, so I think it's a great education that they get a little bit earlier in life that can help them."

Texas coach Mike Brown believes the coach-reporter relationship has taken a darker turn because of changes in the media industry. Because nuts-and-bolts game coverage is so readily and so quickly available from many different sources, Brown said a good friend of his in the media once told him that reporters and columnist often opt to craft opinion and analysis pieces, which often leads to criticism.

"So what has happened is people are having to have different stories and they're more elaborate," Brown said. "Negative stories seem to be more prevalent than positive stories and coaches are about positives."

"Therefore, their jobs are very, very different."

Coaches have developed several different ways to cope with intense media scrutiny. The No. 1 technique? Ignore it.

Missouri coach Gary Pinkel said that's something he learned early in his coaching career, noting that he probably hadn't read a local newspaper since his second year coaching at Toledo in the early 1990s.

"I just focus on what I do," Pinkel said. "That being said, I have to know what my players are reading and hearing. Our (sports information director) does a great job of keeping me informed about what the climate is out there."

Brown, who was heavily criticized for not being able to win big games prior to guiding Texas to the national title in 2005, said he quit partaking in any consumption of local sports talk, TV or newspapers about four or five years ago.

And the Internet?

"I sure don't go on the Internet," Brown said. "Of all the things I don't do, that's probably the one that started me not watching."

In sizing up the entire situation, Pinkel said he really doesn't consider there to be a great divide between media and coaches. It's simply the way things have developed, he said.

"The media has got a job to do, too," Pinkel said. "The dynamics have changed, as I analyze it. I don't think it's personal in any way. It's just the way it is." ■



Bill Callahan says learning to deal with criticism is important.

Terry Douglass is the sports editor of the Grand Island (Neb.) Independent. He can be reached at terry.douglass@msn.com.

National Attention

**Gundy's postgame tirade
part of a strange year in Stillwater**



**Curt
McKEEVER**

IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE to tell whether Mike Gundy was relieved or upset with his Oklahoma State football team after he'd watched it give up a school-record 718 yards and yet, somehow, survive a 49-45 victory against Texas Tech on Sept. 22.

The only thing he did immediately after the wild result that left his club atop the Big 12 South Division was shoot his venom at Jenni Carlson, a columnist from The Oklahoman.

Gundy's postgame session with the media was a three-and-a-half-minute tirade aimed at Carlson's game-day column about Bobby Reid. The article suggested that while Reid was considered to be the team's top quarterback, he'd been replaced by Zac Robinson because of his attitude and questionable toughness.

Gundy fired back with an emotional outburst that drew him national attention, saying three-fourths of the column was "inaccurate, fiction." He added that it was "garbage, and the editor who let it come out is garbage."

And then he stormed from the podium like a teenager in a tizzy, without answering any questions about the game.

Two days later, Gundy said he wished that he'd gotten even more off his chest, but that he also regretted his actions.

"It just happened because of my feelings for the team and the players, and I just felt like it wasn't the right thing," Gundy said. "I certainly didn't do it to receive recognition, and I certainly don't want to take away from this upcoming game like it unfortunately took away from the last game for the team."

Regardless of what he intended, Oklahoma State drew a season-high crowd to Boone Pickens Stadium for its Sept. 29 game against Sam Houston State. But even after that 39-3 victory, things hadn't really changed that much for the Cowboys.

They still ranked second-to-last, nationally, in pass defense (giving up an average of 342.6 yards per game) and 97th in total defense (allowing 442.8 yards).

And even with its 17th-ranked offense, OSU had lost at Troy (41-23) and at Georgia (35-21) to fall to 2-10 in true road games under the third-year coach Gundy.

And yet, when the Cowboys headed to College Station, Texas, for their Oct. 6 game against Texas A&M, they knew a victory would leave them with sole possession of first place in the South.

Yep, it's been a strange year so far in Stillwater.

"They need to go out and play well and continue to get

better and better," Gundy said during a WWLS radio interview the night before the Sam Houston State game. "We've got a long ways to go. You can imagine all the things I've been sent this week, good and bad. One of the best was human beings are just like plants. They grow in the soil of acceptance, not the atmosphere of rejection.

"Our defense is struggling a little bit right now, but we have to put them in the soil of acceptance. We're going to coach their tails off, make them tackle and work hard and not reject them. There is no Plan B in college football. We play the guys we got."

Despite giving up an unprecedented amount of real estate to Texas Tech, Gundy's team limited the Red Raiders to 10 second-half points by stopping six of eight possessions.

"The thing I'm proud of is in the locker room at halftime we were angry and frustrated, but we gathered ourselves," defensive end Nathan Peterson told The Oklahoman. "We stepped up and played a fairly good second half. That's something we can build on."

Or maybe not.

Sam Houston State, featuring former Oklahoma quarterback Rhett Bomar, gougued the Cowboys for 270 passing yards (and 355 total). The Bearkats also crossed midfield on four of their first five possessions.

Good thing for Oklahoma State tailback Dantrell Savage was back in the lineup.

Savage, a senior who averaged 6.5 yards per carry while rushing for 820 yards in 2006, strained his groin in the preseason, then suffered an abdominal strain against Georgia that kept him out of the next two games.

He returned against Texas Tech to gain 130 yards on 25 carries, then dented Sam Houston State for 115 on just 15 rushes.

"You watch. When anybody tackles him, he's the first guy off the ground," offensive coordinator Larry Fedora said. "He is up off the ground and moving back to the line of scrimmage, ready to go. Not only does it give our guys a boost, but also the other team knows, he's coming back, he's not getting tired. He definitely gives us a spark."

Considering the scene after the Texas Tech game, better Savage than the alternative.

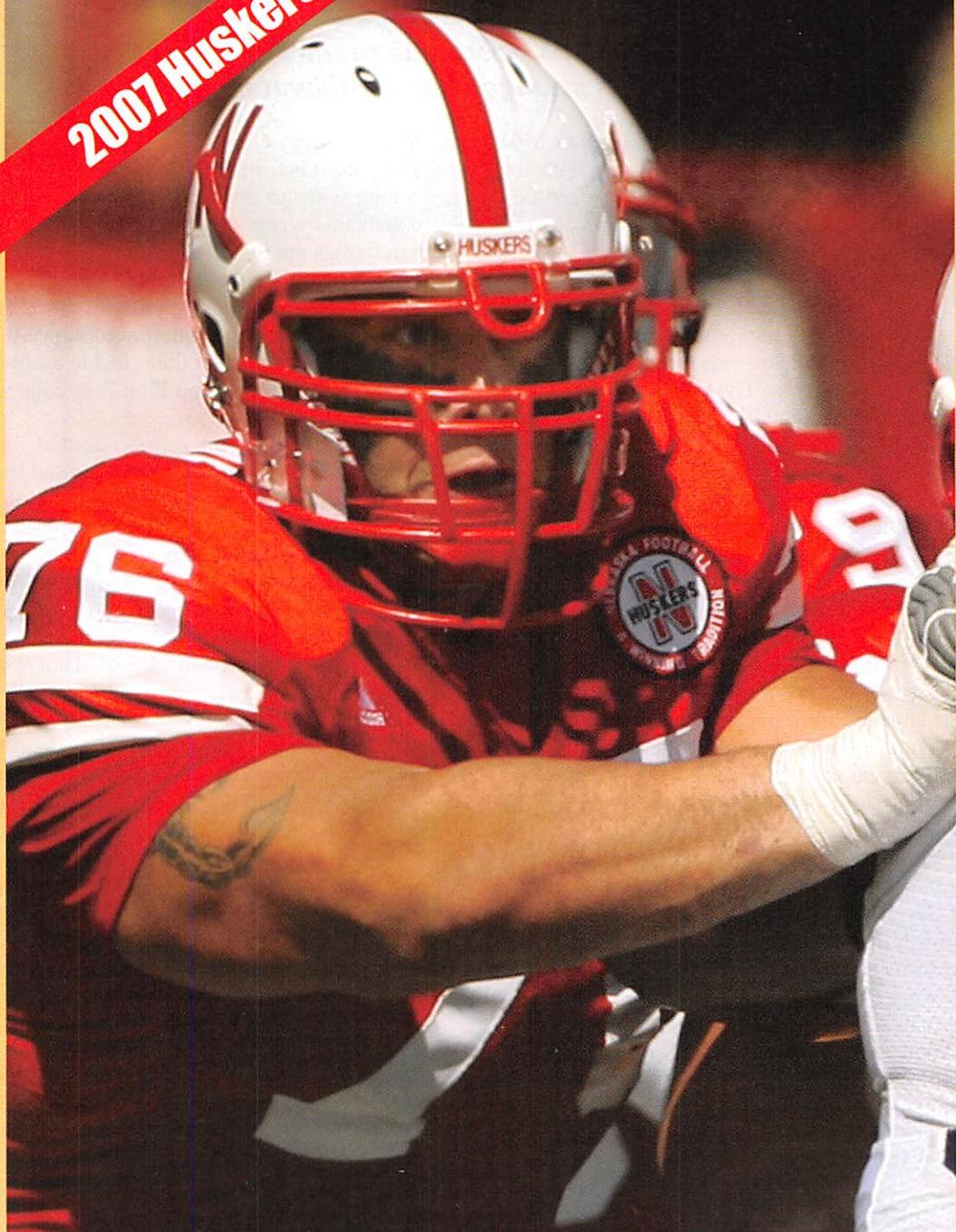
After all, the Cowboys have enough on-field issues to settle that they shouldn't get too distracted by what's being written about them. ■



Mike Gundy's post-game speech received national attention.

Curt McKeever is a sportswriter for the Lincoln Journal Star. In addition to reporting on football, he is the primary beat writer for baseball. Curt can be reached at cmckeever@journalstar.com

2007 Huskers



LYDON MURTHA
Offensive Tackle

'I Just Kind Of Lighten The Mood'

By MIKE BABCOCK • PHOTOS: SCOTT BRUHN

Who's the funniest guy on the Nebraska football team?

Sophomore linebacker Phillip Dillard pondered the weighty question. "I don't know," he said. "It's kind of hard to say because everyone always sees me as a jokester."

He thought about it. He didn't want to say himself.

Senior offensive lineman Jordan Picou is funny. OK, so Picou is the funniest.

Before he could make that his final answer, however, he reconsidered.

The answer had come to him.

It was obvious now.

"Oh, Murtha. I'd say Murtha," Dillard said.

Lydon Murtha takes that as a compliment. "I joke around, try to lighten things up, have fun," the junior offensive tackle said. "That's kind of my personality."

Besides, football, particularly at the major college level, is a "pretty mentally challenging sport," he said. "We all get up-tight. We're on edge. So I just kind of lighten the mood, you know?"

☆ ☆ ☆

The mental aspect of the game probably held Murtha back until last season, according to offensive line coach Dennis Wagner. He really didn't understand his ability, what he was capable of doing, and because of that he hadn't been challenging himself as much as he should have been.

"Each person is different," Wagner said early in training camp. "We all mature at different levels. The light bulb really came on for him, I thought, midway through the season last year."

Murtha started three of the last five games, two at left tackle and the other at right tackle, against Auburn in the Cotton Bowl. He continued to play well in spring practice.

In fact, "he had a tremendous spring," said Wagner.

Murtha established himself at right tackle, as the offensive line was shuffled to account for the departure of Chris

Patrick, the starting left tackle most of the season.

Carl Nicks moved from right tackle to left. Matt Slauson moved from right tackle to guard. And Murtha moved from left tackle, where he had been Patrick's back-up.

Though no position is permanent in the offensive line, except of course center, Murtha appears to have settled in at right tackle. And that's where he's most comfortable.

"They say right-hand dominant," he said. "I'm stronger at that side, I guess."

Otherwise, there is little difference between the two tackles. The play-calling is the same. "Just the right tackle, I would say, is more the brute tackle," Murtha said.

His attitude is different this season. He has made "a 180," though not necessarily because he's on the right side. "Now that I have a starting role, that's the main thing," he said.

"I was rotating before, and I didn't really like rotating too much. It threw me off. It takes away your momentum during a game. Now that I have a starting role, it kind of forces you to step up."

☆ ☆ ☆

Wagner wasn't surprised by Murtha's training-camp, Mohawk haircut.

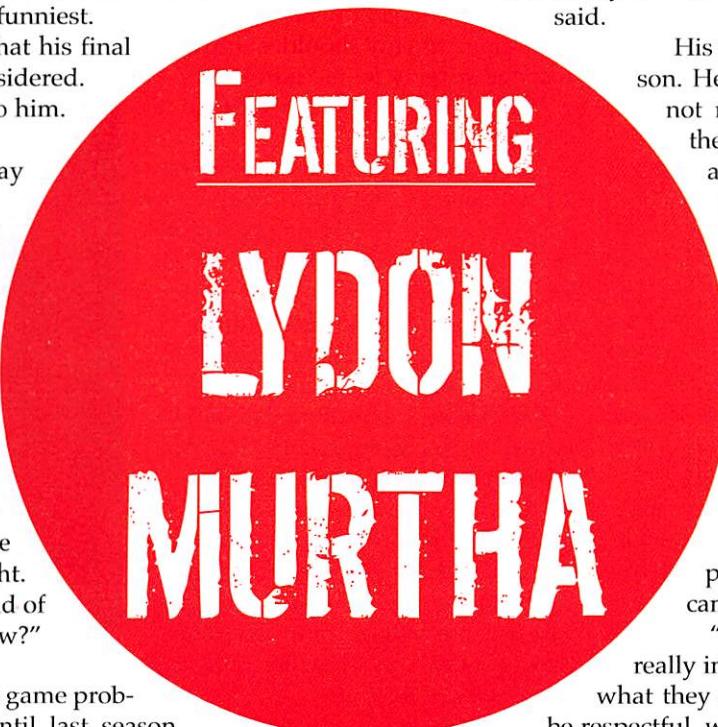
"We tell our guys we're not really into haircuts and telling them what they do or don't do. It's just (to) be respectful, wear something your parents would allow you to wear," said Wagner.

"If we think it's offending to anyone or we were offended, we would tell them. But it's camp and there are a lot worse things we could do than cut a Mohawk in our hair." He spoke in the collective "we." He didn't have a Mohawk.

When he played in the offensive line in college he had long hair, hanging out the back of his helmet, and for a time it was bleached blonde. His offensive linemen have seen the photographs.

As soon as he was married, his wife "straightened me out," he has said. The hair was cut.

"It wasn't that long," Murtha said. "But I give him crap about it."



FEATURING
LYDON
MURTHA

"I came in here and didn't do anything until now. Just my junior year I'm really starting to play well, live up to expectations . . . "

— Lydon Murtha

In addition to the training-camp Mohawk, shaped by Slauson with a razor, Murtha has dyed his hair red and worn what he calls a "skunk Mohawk," a white stripe dyed down the middle of hair otherwise dyed coal black. Last year during the winter, his hair was cut in a mullet. He'll try anything.

"They say your mom's dad, if he goes bald, you will, right? Well, I won't have my hair much longer, I guess, so I can do whatever I want with it," he said. "I've shaved it every which way."

The best he's had? "Probably the mullet. I like mullets," he said.

☆☆☆

Murtha might have been the most prominent member of coach Bill Callahan's first recruiting class. He was the Gatorade Player of the Year in Minnesota as a senior, on a Hutchinson High team that included Cornhusker teammate Nate Swift and Minnesota quarterback Tony Mortensen.

Recruiting analyst Tom Lemming rated him the nation's top tackle prospect. He committed to Minnesota during his junior year in high school, and most recruiters backed off. Nebraska came in late, convincing him to visit in January of 2004, a month before letters of intent could be signed.

Murtha changed his mind. He had committed too early, "not knowing the aspects of it," he said. Minnesota "wasn't right for me. The campus was too big, the whole works."

Nebraska seemed a good fit. Swift told him he would like it, but didn't try to sway him.

"No one really hassled me," Murtha said.

He arrived with high expectations, not so much his but those of fans. And it appeared he might play without

redshirting, something offensive linemen almost never did at Nebraska.

Those expectations were quickly doused, however, when he was injured in a freak accident early in training camp. A piece of practice apparatus, "the chute," fell on a calf.

Other injuries have hampered his progress, too.

"I'm kind of a train wreck," he said recently when asked to recount them. "Wow, I had my knee scoped. I had surgery on my shoulder, tore that out, had surgery on my nose."

"Let's see, since I've been here, I think that's about it."

The "chute" accident wasn't the most unusual, though. A couple of days before the 2005 Spring Game, he was leaving Memorial Stadium on his mo-ped when he collided with a car making an unexpected U-turn. "I call it a 'motorcycle' accident," he said. "It sounds a little more tough."

He suffered a torn meniscus but played in the Spring Game. His dad confiscated the mo-ped.

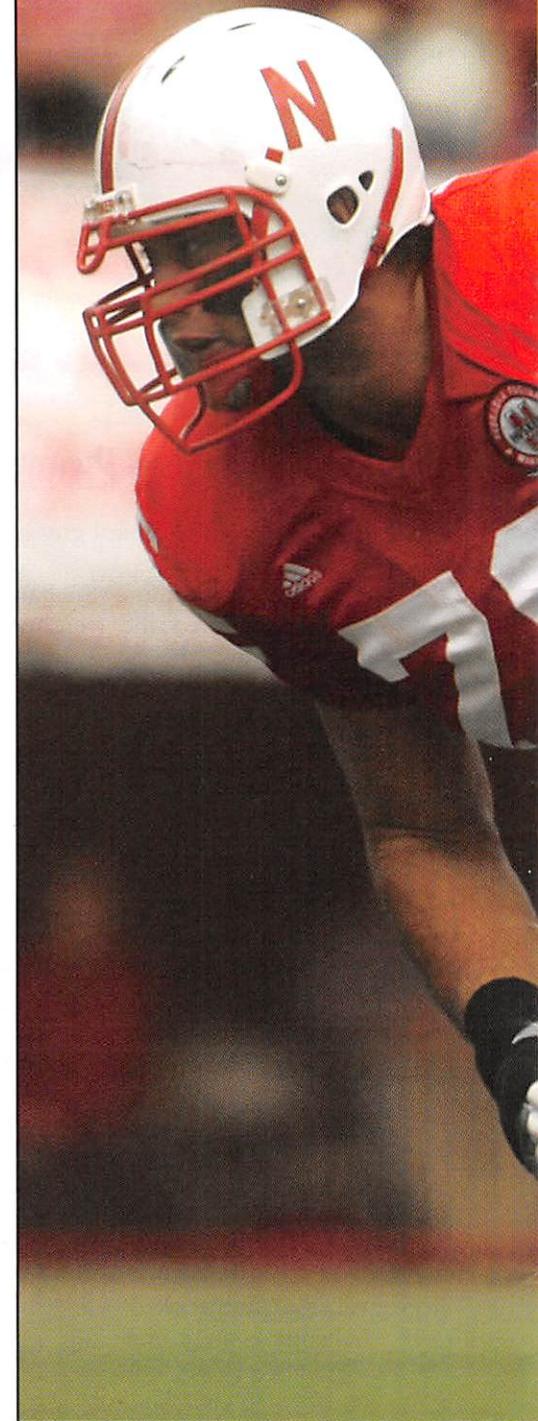
"I think the car was damaged more than my mo-ped," Murtha said.

Even without the injuries, he probably would have needed time to adjust to the college game. Recruiting hype creates considerable pressure, as he quickly learned.

"I used to get pretty down," said Murtha. "I tried to make a good impression. Any player who goes to a big school wants to make a good impression on the whole state. You're playing for such a good program you want to do the best you can. I really put it on myself to perform."

"If I screwed up at all, I'd get down about it."

A player his size — 6-foot-7 and 300-plus — can dominate in high school. He might line up against a 190-pound defensive tackle. But that's not the case at the collegiate



level.

"In college, everyone's got the best players," he said.

Recruiting rankings contribute to unreasonable expectations.

"A lot of people look at how many stars you are, this and that," said Murtha. "For instance, I think I was a four-star or five-star, I don't quite remember. But 'top tackle in the nation' . . . I came in here and didn't do anything until now. Just my junior year I'm really starting to play well, live up to expectations, while Matt Slauson, who had no awards and wasn't really recruited, he's just dom-



Junior Lydon Murtha has settled in as the starting right tackle, after spending most of his first two seasons on the left side. He started three games in 2005 and three in 2006 at left tackle.

inating.

"So you've got to come in, just be humble and work as hard as you can."

☆ ☆ ☆

Hockey was Murtha's first love in athletics. As he remembers it, he was on skates about the age of 3, soon after his family moved to Minnesota. That stands to reason. Minnesota is a hockey state, though his hometown, Hutchinson, is an exception. High school football has an edge on hockey there.

He was a good skater, still is for that matter. But he doesn't get many opportunities these days. There's no place in Lincoln for open skating, and even if there were, he doesn't have the time.

He goes to Lincoln Stars hockey games when he has time. He enjoys watching hockey, in person. He won't watch it on television. As a rule, he doesn't watch any sports on television.

"Believe it or not, I'm not a huge sports fan," he said.

But when he's home, he'll go to see the NHL's Minnesota Wild.

Hockey is "pretty simple," he said. "It's just passing the puck around. You have to be really athletic, and you see some of these guys, how they control the puck, hit people . . . it's a great game."

He wasn't as big as he is now, of course. He quit playing hockey his junior year in high school. But size doesn't always define a player on ice. "I'll tell you what, those little guys who fly around, they're the ones that are hitting you and hurting you. I used to love getting in little fights," he said.

"Guys get in trouble a lot in hockey, doing dirty things. Those little guys would hip-check you and you'd fly into the boards. I broke my collarbone twice, hurt my knee once."

He was a defenseman, but "I probably tried to handle the puck more than I should have," he said.

Was he a budding Bobby Orr, the Hall of Fame defenseman for the Boston Bruins?

"No, I wasn't born in 1920," said Murtha.

☆ ☆ ☆

He was born in Homestead, Fla., in 1985. His dad was stationed at the Air Force base there. A couple of years after his family moved to Minnesota, Hurricane Andrew swept south Florida.

"It wiped out the entire Air Force base," he said. "So basically we moved just in time."

His family has returned to Florida many times to visit relatives there, as well as to vacation.

"I love Florida, love it," he said. "It's a great place."

He's been to Disney World probably 10 times. It's also a great place, though he would still avoid the 'It's a Small World' ride, "with all those little dolls. That really creeps me out," he said.

"I try to stay out of there as much as I can. I usually have nightmares."

He's a funny guy, who belongs in Minnesota.

"I probably couldn't go there (Florida) now because I'm sweating," he said after practice on a mild September afternoon. "I'm soaking wet if it's 70 degrees."

"I need cold, so I prefer Minnesota." ■

10 QUESTIONS

with

LARRY ASANTE

Sophomore Safety
Alexandria, Va.

Nebraska coach Bill Callahan talked to Larry Asante about playing running back. "A little bit," Asante said. "But I told him I couldn't play running back. I'm a safety."

He wasn't always a safety, however. In high school, his focus was on running back. And he was good enough at the position that Virginia offered him a scholarship.

Had he met Virginia's entrance requirements, he'd probably be playing running back there now. But he went to Coffeyville (Kan.) Community College instead, still expecting to be a running back.

The problem was Coffeyville had plenty of running backs and not enough safeties. Asante also had played some safety in high school, so he made the switch. And he hasn't looked back.

Though safety was his position, he often lined up as a linebacker, too, playing well enough to earn junior college All-America honorable mention and a four-star ranking from Rivals.com.

Former Cornhusker running back Brandon Jackson was among those who served as a recruiting host when he visited Lincoln. "Just getting to know Brandon was probably one of the reasons I committed to the school," Asante said. "I loved the school. And I loved the coaches."

Had he not come to Nebraska, he probably would have transferred closer to a school closer to home, Virginia Tech or Clemson. But "it wasn't really about location," he said.

"It was the best place for me, where I was going to fit in."

He arrived at mid-term and went through spring practice. And because he redshirted his first season at Coffeyville, he still has two more seasons as a Cornhusker.

Oh yes, he earned a place on the Big 12 Spring Honor Roll, too.

What's the best movie you've seen lately?

"'300.' It's just basically underdogs versus, 300 Spartans against a million Persians. Just the storyline behind it, I loved it. It's about 300 men working together as one, working for one common goal. It's kind of like football where you have 11 on the field working to accomplish one goal. So it relates to football. That's why I like the movie so much. I saw it in the theater, and I've got it on DVD."

What's the best thing served at the training table?

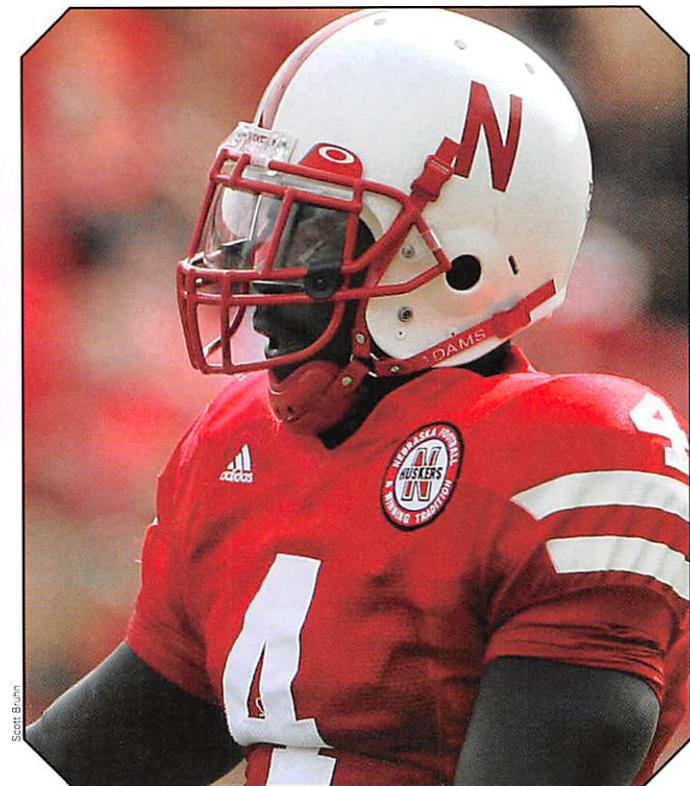
"Spaghetti, that's what I like. I just love spaghetti."

Who's the funniest guy on the team?

"I'll have to say Menelik Holt; he's the funniest guy on the team. He's always cracking me up. He says a lot of funny stuff. Look at him, he's laughing right now."

Sky diving, bungee jumping or rock climbing?

"I would have to go with rock climbing. I've never done it,



and I like to do new things. I've done bungee jumping. Sky diving, I'd never do that. Bungee jumping was scary."

What would you absolutely have to have on your iPod or MP3 player?

"The movie '300.' The theme song we play when we come out of the Tunnel Walk. I just get chills every time I hear the song. They play it in the locker room before we go out. I've heard it over a hundred times, and every time I hear it, I get chills. I would have to have that on my iPod."

If someone came to visit you in Virginia, what would you show them?

"I'd take them to Washington, D.C., show them that. It's a unique place, real nice. I'm only 10 minutes away from there. It's just the environment, the scene. The White House is right there, the Pentagon. It's just a beautiful scene to show tourists."

If you could excel at any collegiate sport except football, what would you pick?

"Basketball, I played basketball in high school, either a shooting guard or a small forward. I played through my senior year. I gave that up. I had to put my main focus on football. I was getting looked at by some Division II schools, but I left that alone. I ran track to get better at football."

If you could spend 30 minutes with a celebrity, who would it be?

"I would say Ronnie Lott. I would just want to know how he did it, how he went about doing things because he was a very successful safety. I'd learn as much as I can about playing safety because he's been through it. He excelled at it. I'd want to know what his keys were, how he got to be the legend he is."

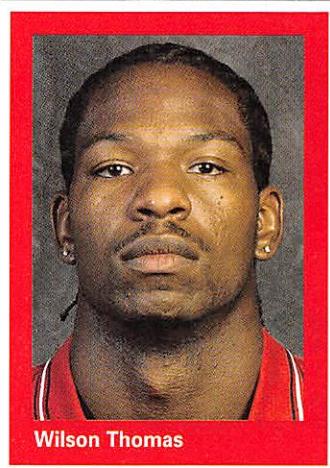
What's the best thing to do in Coffeyville, Kan.?

"Sleep. It was a small town, nothing really to do so get as much rest as you can, watch film, watch the next opponent. Pretty much that's all you could do."

If you could eat only one thing for the next month, what would it be?

"Spaghetti, it would have to be spaghetti. My mom, she makes the best spaghetti. I don't know what she does. I don't mess with cooking too much. I just love spaghetti." ■

CHASING THE JET



LISTS

10 FROM OKLAHOMA

(Victor Stachmus was Nebraska's first scholarship recruit from Oklahoma. But the lineman from McAlester was diagnosed with leukemia and never played for the Cornhuskers. Richard Triplett, from Enid, earned letters as an end in 1920 and 1921. And Phillip Dillard, who's from Tulsa, is in the regular rotation at linebacker now. Here are 10 others who came from Oklahoma and lettered.)

Zac Taylor (QB, 2005-06), Norman
Adam Blankenship (DE, 2005),
Tulsa

Jason Lohr (DL, 1998-03), Tulsa
Josh Brown (PK, 1999-02), Foyil
Jon Rutherford (OL, 1998-01),
Midwest City

Josh Heskew (C, 1995-98), Mustang
Kareem Sears (RE, 1996), Enid
Mike Minter (DB, 1993-95), Lawton
*Jason Pesterfield (DL, 1992-94),
Pauls Valley

Will Shields (OL, 1989-92), Lawton
*walked on

SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITY

(Concerns that the walk-on program would go away under Bill Callahan have been alleviated. During his tenure, these players have walked on and earned scholarships.)

Fall 2007

Dan Erickson — Omaha, Neb.

Summer/Fall 2006

Todd Peterson — Grand Island,
Neb.

Brandon Rigoni — Lincoln, Neb.
Ben Eisenhart — Culbertson, Neb.
Andy Kadavy — Seward, Neb.

Winter 2006

Matt Slauson — Colorado Springs,
Colo.

Fall 2005

Grant Mulkey — Arlington, Texas
Matt Schroeder — Belden, Neb.
Joey Robison — Bertrand, Neb.
Lane Kelly — Omaha, Neb.

Summer 2005

Newt Lingenfelter — Plainview,
Neb.
Blake Tiedtke — Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Fall 2004

Sam Koch — Seward, Neb.

Spring 2004

Brandon Koch — Gothenburg, Neb.
Shane Siegel — Grand Island, Neb.
Kellen Huston — Ankeny, Iowa
Dusty Keiser — Norfolk, Neb.

Firepower



Blaine Gabbert, who passed for 1,523 yards and 20 touchdowns as a junior, had thrown for 566 yards and five touchdowns through four games this year.

**2008 class
includes top
prospects
on offense**

By Rick Shaw

In today's college football world, you need to be able to score a lot of points to win consistently. With high octane offenses being the rule, a team needs to be able to score and score fast if it

NEBRASKA COMMITMENTS FOR 2008

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	40	Hometown (School)
Will Compton	LB	6-2	214	4.5	Bonne Terre, Mo. (North County)
Sean Fisher	LB	6-5	210	4.6	Omaha, Neb. (Millard North)
Blaine Gabbert	QB	6-4	226	4.65	Ballwin, Mo. (Parkway West)
Bryce Givens	OL	6-6	257	5.1	Denver, Colo. (J.K. Mullen)
Jonas Gray	RB	5-10	213	4.44	Detroit, Mich. (Country Day)
Eric Harper	DE	6-4	220	4.62	Marrero La. (John Ehret)
Ricky Henry	OL	6-4	300	5.2	Omaha, Neb. (Burke/North Dakota State College of Science)
Tyson Hetzer	TE	6-7	265	4.75	Glendora, Calif. (Citrus CC)
Adrian Hilburn	WR	6-2	190	4.4	San Francisco, Calif. (City College of SF)
Dan Hoch	OL	6-6	295	5.21	Harlan, Iowa
Keelan Johnson	DB	6-0	195	4.5	Mesa, Ariz.
John Levorson	ATH	6-4	185	4.55	Crete, Neb.
Cameron Meredith	DE	6-4	222	4.6	Santa Ana, Calif. (Mater Dei)
Shaun Mohler	LB	6-3	225	4.6	Costa Mesa, Calif. (Orange Coast CC)
Collins Okafor	RB	6-1	210	4.54	Omaha, Neb. (Westside)
Darius Parish	DT	6-3	325	5.08	Wichita, Kan.
Kyler Reed	ATH	6-3	204	4.5	Overland Park, Kan. (St. Thomas Aquinas)
Doug Rippy	LB	6-2	218	4.6	Columbus, Ohio (McKinley)
Baker Steinkuhler	OL	6-6	290	4.88	Lincoln, Neb. (Southwest)
David Whitmore	DB	6-2	190	4.5	Port Arthur, Texas (Memorial)
Josh Williams	DE	6-4	220	4.8	Denton, Texas (Ryan)
D.J. Woods	WR	6-0	169	4.35	Strongsville, Ohio

For more daily recruiting information, visit HuskersIllustrated.com, a member of the Rivals.com network.

aspire to battle for championships.

Nebraska coach Bill Callahan and his staff understand the importance of fielding a team with plenty of offensive punch. The Huskers have built one of the nation's most impressive collections of offensive backfield talent for their recruiting class of 2008.

Any great team must have a star-caliber quarterback calling the signals, and Blaine Gabbert appears to fit that bill. Rated the nation's No. 2 pro-style quarterback and No. 14 recruit overall (five stars) by Rivals.com, the 6-foot-4, 226-pound athlete from Parkway West High School in Ballwin, Mo., appears to have everything it takes to be a star in college.

Named the Most Valuable Player at the EA Sports Elite 11 Quarterback Camp this past summer, Gabbert caught the eye of a number of college coaches. However, his May pledge to Nebraska trumped scholarship offers from Oregon, Tennessee, Alabama, Missouri, Iowa and others. The blue-chipper from the "Show-Me State" said he had his heart set on playing for the Cornhuskers.

"I kind of knew Nebraska was the place for me when I went there the first time," Gabbert said. "That has stayed true, and I haven't really second guessed myself at all. Coming up on game day to watch Nebraska take on USC reinforced that even more. The fan support was unbelievable along with being around the coaches and the players.

"I have a very good relationship with coach (Shawn) Watson, and I believe he will help me achieve my goals as well as the team's goals. I want to reach the top level at the University of Nebraska, personally as well as our team. I strongly believe that we can go all the way. I feel that Nebraska is building that right now, and with this recruiting class we can and will do that."

Gabbert passed for 1,523 yards and 20 touchdowns as a junior, earning first-team all-area honors. He also used his legs to run for 458 yards (7.8 yards per carry) and eight scores.

"I'm a prototypical drop-back passer by my looks, but I have an

RECRUITING NOTES

Texas Lineman Enjoys NU Visit

By Sean Stevens

In early April, Nebraska secured the oral commitment of Elkhorn, Neb. offensive guard Trevor Robinson (6-foot-6, 304 pounds). The Rivals.com four-star recruit chose the Huskers over Michigan and Notre Dame. However, in July Robinson reopened his recruitment and has yet to make a final decision among those three schools.

While Nebraska is still hoping to regain Robinson's pledge, it has not stopped recruiting other players at his position. One such player is Brandon Thompson (6-6, 280) of The Woodlands, Texas, who was in Lincoln for an official visit during the Iowa State game.

Thompson's interest has been high ever since he received his Nebraska scholarship offer.

"I was just really excited because I know the tradition they have there and the football program," Thompson said. "I mean the program for offensive linemen there is one of the best, I know that."

Nebraska is not the only program pursuing Thompson. He also sports offers from Oklahoma State, Purdue, Texas A&M and Texas Tech, among others. The Huskers hold a slight lead over Northwestern and Texas A&M.

"I really like Nebraska," he said. "It such a great program for my position, and they have such a strong following. It's a great college town."

He visited Lincoln with his father and came away impressed.

"I was just pretty much blown away by everything," Thompson said. "It was extremely nice. Everything went great. It puts them as one of my top choices right now."

Although he's being recruited primarily for the offensive line, analysts believe that Thompson could play on either side of the ball in college. That makes him even more valuable for NU's class.

He will take one more official visit to Purdue in early October before making a final choice.

Given Thompson's versatility, it is possible that both Robinson and Thompson could be Huskers on Signing Day.

● One player who Husker fans had hoped would join the program was linebacker Kenny Demens (6-1, 224) of Detroit, Mich. Late in the summer, it appeared that the Huskers were in the driver's seat for Demens' pledge, however, things changed when Michigan offered a scholarship to Demens in early August.

Demens grew up in a family full of Wolverine fans, but his teammate and best friend, running back Jonas Gray (5-10, 213) committed to Nebraska. Demens also built relationships with other Nebraska commitments, which made his choice even more difficult.

In the end, Demens chose his home-state school over the Huskers and Michigan State because of the opportunity to play near his mother.

"I was at church, and the preacher was speaking about staying home and it really touched me in a special way. That's what I was waiting for. When I got home I was just thinking and my mom walked into the kitchen and I said 'Mom, I'm going to Michigan.'"

● Nebraska now looks forward to hosting Aldine, Texas, linebacker Anthony Lewis (6-2, 210) in early November to possibly fill the spot that Demens was expected to hold. ■



Brandon Thompson

extremely strong arm and I'm extremely accurate," Gabbert said. "I'm also extremely fast. If you look at me, you'd not say I'm very fast, but I can usually run in the 4.5 range in the 40. That's something a little extra that helps."

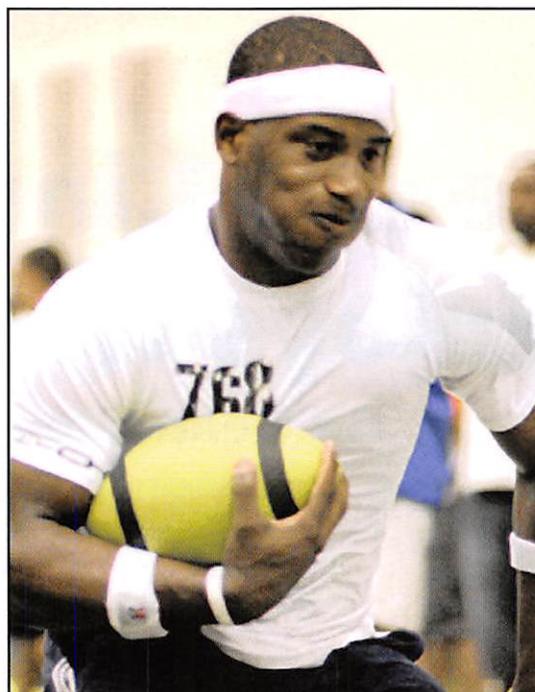
The athlete from Missouri got off to a bit of a slow start to the 2007 season, throwing for 566 yards and five touchdowns (against four interceptions) in his first four games. He completed less than 50 percent of his passes.

"The first few games, we were getting our feet wet as a team," Gabbert said. "Once we get into a groove as a team, we'll be pretty hard to stop."

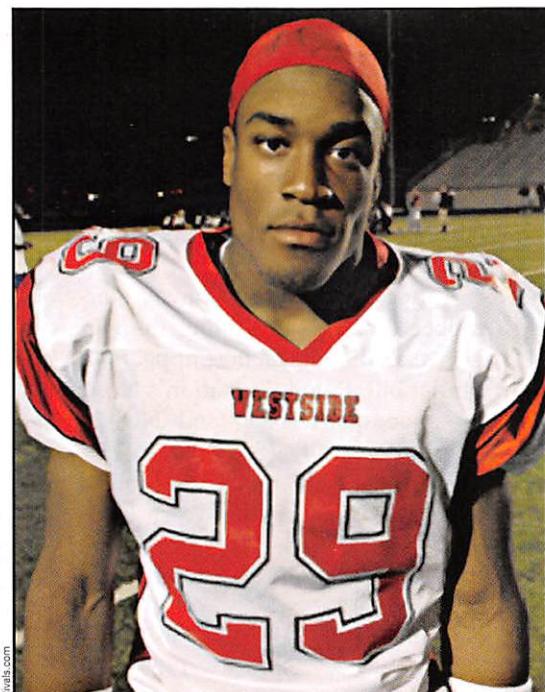
One player that has been difficult to slow down, let alone stop, during his prep career is running back Jonas Gray. The 5-10, 213-pound athlete out of Country Day High School in Detroit slowed down long enough to deliver an oral commitment to Nebraska in early August.

"I chose Nebraska because of the personable staff, the excellent facilities and the college football atmosphere," Gray said. "And also the tradition of winning one and off the field — 63 Academic All-Americans, ranked among the nation's best of all-time in NCAA history, five national championships and the tradition of having great running backs — Mike Rozier, Ahman Green, Johnny Rodgers, Roger Craig and Brandon Jackson.

"It was just the overall tradition of winning on and off the field and the excellence and tradition that were my main reasons for choosing Nebraska. Also, when I went there, I just kind of got that gut feeling. I was looking for that gut feeling at every place that I went to. I said that if I got that gut feeling I would probably cut my decision early. I heard from many recruits that once you go to Nebraska, it is like no other place and they were exactly right."



Jonas Gray (left) of Country Day High School in Detroit and Collins Okafor of Omaha Westside are the running back prospects in Nebraska's 2008 class.



Rated the nation's No. 4 running back and No. 36 recruit overall (four stars) by Rivals.com, Gray chose the Huskers after carefully considering scholarship offers from a host of other big-time programs, including Florida, Michigan, Louisville and Wisconsin.

Gray earned first-team all-state honors as a junior after rushing for 1,252 yards and 19 touchdowns. Through his first five games of the 2007 schedule, Gray rushed for 881 yards and 11 touchdowns on only 111 carries.

A unique blend of power and speed (Gray ran a 4.3-second 40-yard dash at the Michigan Camp this past summer), the speedster from Big Ten Country should challenge for immediate playing time when he reaches Lincoln.

A second big-time back committed to Nebraska is Collins Okafor of Omaha Westside High School. The 6-1, 210-pound athlete was one of the first prospects to commit to the 2008 class, announcing his decision back in October of 2006.

"Coach (Randy) Jordan just made me feel welcome, and I like how he's talked to me about how he uses his (running) backs," Okafor said. "I felt like we believe in the same theory for backs — that a running back should be complete. They should be able to run, catch, block, use their eyes, have good vision and break tackles. I also

like how he (Jordan) uses all of his backs."

Okafor did a little bit of everything as a junior en route to earning first-team all-state honors. Most notably, he ran for a school record 1,865 yards and 16 touchdowns.

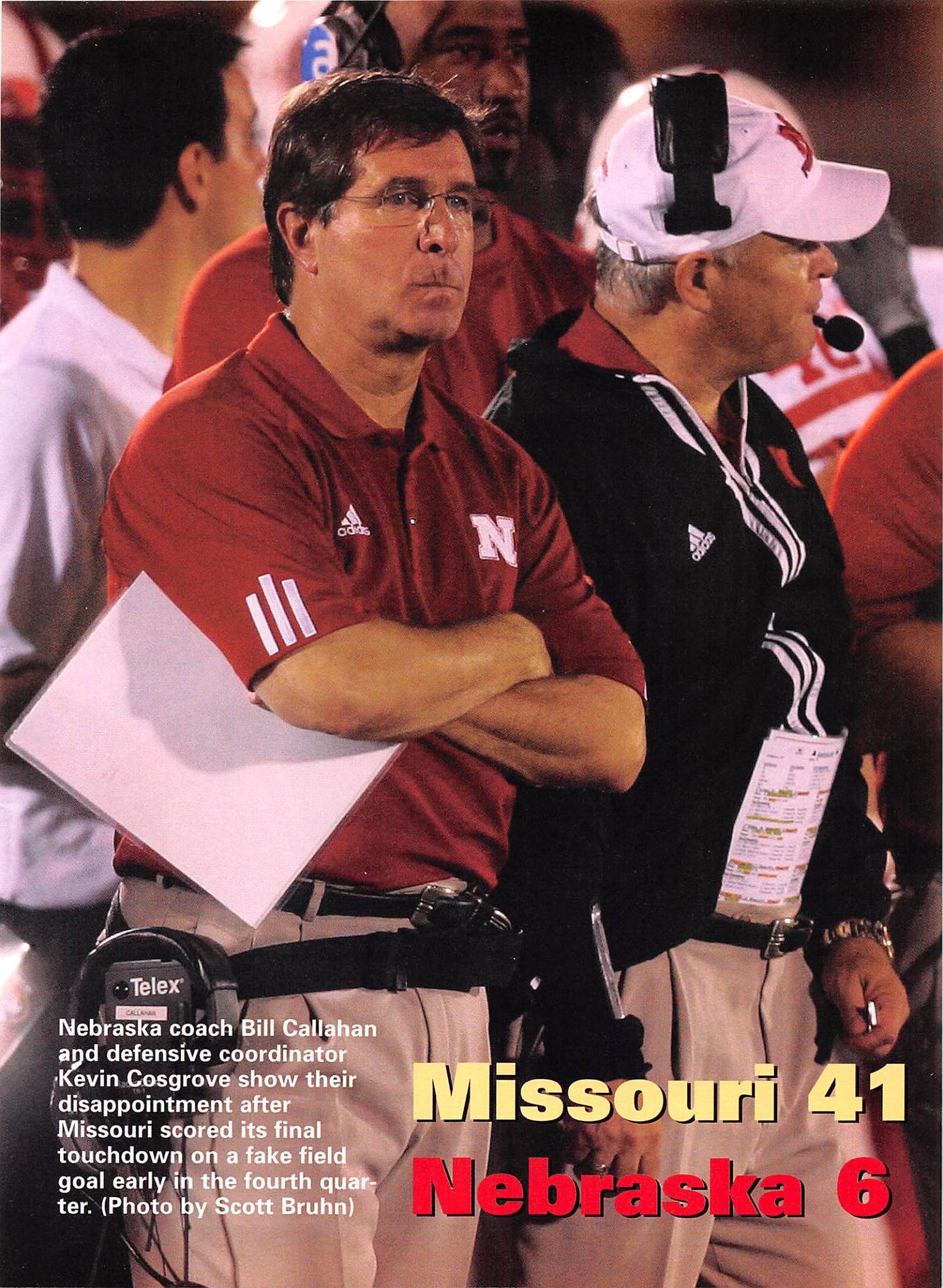
In four games this season, Okafor has 177 carries for 862 yards and eight touchdowns.

Rated the No. 38 prospect in the country (three stars) by Rivals.com, Okafor has been a frequent visitor to Memorial Stadium this fall. He was one of many recruits in attendance at Nebraska's game against USC in September. Although the Huskers lost that game, Okafor said he remains a solid commit.

"I'm ready to get pads on and go," Okafor said. "When you commit to a team, you stay committed and you don't take official visits. I felt stronger (after the visit) than ever because the way we ate together as a group, and all that. It just felt unified and really good."

Nebraska is doing everything it can to ensure that future teams have the firepower to put a lot of points on the scoreboard. With blue-chippers committed at quarterback and running back, it certainly is off to a solid start. ■

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Nebraska coach Bill Callahan and defensive coordinator Kevin Cosgrove show their disappointment after Missouri scored its final touchdown on a fake field goal early in the fourth quarter. (Photo by Scott Bruhn)

Missouri 41
Nebraska 6

'Put This One Be

**Callahan, Keller say
Huskers must get
past difficult loss**

**By Mike Babcock
Photos: Scott Bruhn**

The postgame atmosphere was typical. Not much different about that. It's always this way in Columbia, Mo. The large semi that would carry the Nebraska football team's equipment back to Lincoln was backed up to the locker room entrance and the rumble of its engine overwhelmed the interviews conducted nearby.

In addition, as if on cue, the Missouri marching band passed close by on its way out of the stadium, drums pounding. "It's really hard to carry on a dialogue," Nebraska coach Bill Callahan said.

He was surprisingly patient considering what he had just witnessed.

More than once a reporter had to repeat a question. Noise permeated the warm air.

Postgame interviews are nearly impossible here. And the late hour magnified the discomfort. But still the questions came. And still Callahan answered, though as often as not in generalities.

"We're going to have to put this one behind us quickly," he said.

More clatter from unseen people came over the concrete walls.

"It's really difficult to hear," said Callahan. More waiting.

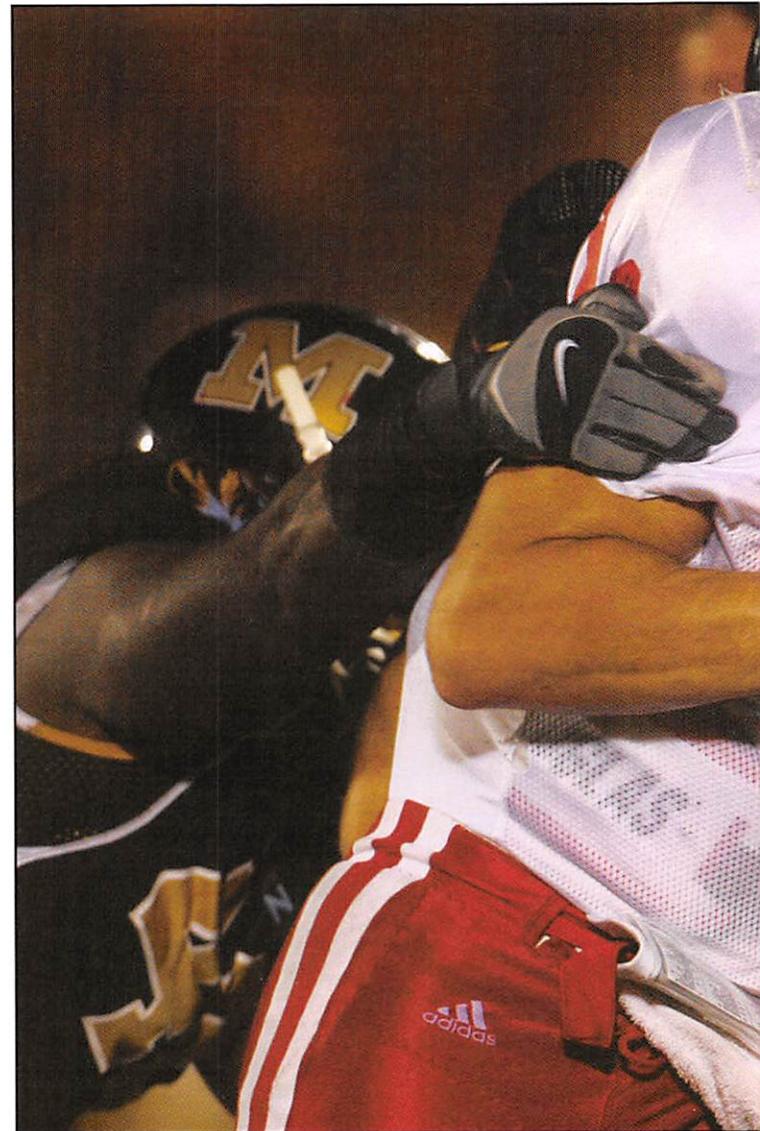
One difference on this particular night was that Missouri fans didn't storm the field afterward. They didn't even have the courtesy to pull down the goal posts, to pretend it was a big deal. That was accomplished by official personnel, armed with long poles. They were ready as the final seconds ticked off the clock.

But there was no urgency to bring down the poles. It was just another victory at Faurot Field.

Only a handful of interview subjects came to the tent set up for that purpose. The last was Cornhusker quarterback Sam Keller, who was uncharacteristically subdued.

"I'm extremely disappointed," he said. "I can't really put my finger on it. It's just a horrible, horrible feeling. I take it on myself because when it comes down to it, I've got to

TURNING POINT



Nebraska quarterback Sam Keller is hit by a pair of Missouri defenders. The MU defense, which had struggled earlier this season, sacked Keller twice and had one interception.

make the plays to keep this team in it.

"I just feel bad that I couldn't do that tonight."

Nebraska managed only two field goals, the first on its second possession, after falling behind 14-0 and driving to the Missouri 9-yard line, where it faced third-and-2.

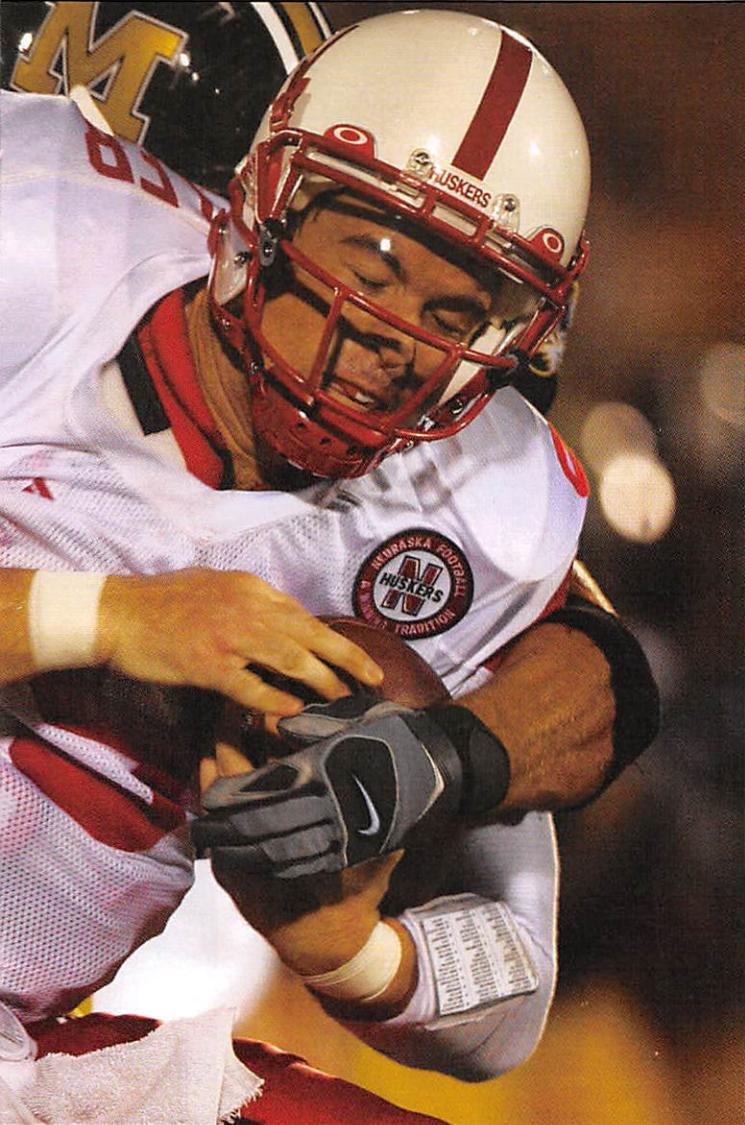
Keller's pass, intended for Todd Peterson, was incomplete, and the Cornhuskers settled for three points.

"Three points is all fine. You want to score points," Keller said. "But you really go down there to score touchdowns. And we couldn't score any tonight. Once again, I take that on myself."

"We've just got to be men about it and stay together."

That would be a recurrent theme during his 5-minute session.

Behind Us'



"One loss is one loss," he said. "We got blown out, and it hurts. It just really, really hurts. It hurts all of our guys. We're just going to go back this week and practice, stay together and go to work next week, love playing football, love each other. That's the key. We can't let this drag on into next week and the week after that."

The Cornhuskers return home for games against Oklahoma State and Texas A&M before finishing with three of their final four games on the road. Six games remain to get things turned around.

"We have to be men about this, just focus on one game at a time, one practice at a time, one rep at a time," said Keller. "So we just have to stay together. And I'm going to do the best I can to make sure that happens."

Maybe having to settle for the first field goal was a turning point in the game. Maybe being unable to stop Missouri on its first two drives was a turning point. But for

REPORT CARD

RUSHING OFFENSE

Since 2005, 15 players have rushed for 100 or more yards against Missouri, including eight who had career-high totals. This season, Mississippi's BenJarvus Green-Ellis rushed for 226 yards against the Tigers and Illinois State's Geno Blow rushed for 116 yards, on only 21 carries. Missouri ranked 71st nationally against the run going into the game. Nebraska managed 74 yards. ★

PASSING OFFENSE

Missouri ranked 104th nationally in pass defense, an area in which the Cornhuskers should have been able to attack. Sam Keller completed 25-of-43 for 223 yards with one interception. He was sacked twice and hit on several other occasions. And he didn't throw a touchdown pass, after throwing at least two in each of the last three games. ★★

RUSHING DEFENSE

Missouri ran often enough and effectively enough to keep Nebraska off-balance defensively. More to the point, perhaps, the Tigers averaged 5.4 yards per rush. "We had guys in position time after time after time," coach Bill Callahan said. "I'm not pointing fingers. I'm just giving them (Tigers) credit." ★

PASSING DEFENSE

Missouri went into the game ranked second in the Big 12 and sixth nationally in passing offense, so there's no surprise here. Chase Daniel was masterful, completing 33-of-47 for 401 yards and two touchdowns, without an interception (though the Cornhuskers dropped a couple) and no sacks. No pressure, no hope of containing the Tigers' talented receivers. Tight ends Martin Rucker and Chase Coffman combined for 15 catches for 184 yards and the two touchdowns. ★

SPECIAL TEAMS

Cornhusker punter Dan Titchener came through, averaging 42.8 yards per punt. But Missouri's Adam Crossett was even better, averaging 46 yards. The Cornhuskers' Alex Henery kicked two field goals. But so did Missouri Jeff Wolfert. Plus, the Tigers scored a touchdown on a fake field goal attempt. "In each phase, we didn't do well tonight," Callahan said. And he included special teams. ★★

NUMBERS

41

Missouri has scored 41 points against Nebraska in each of the last three games at Columbia. The Tigers went into the game averaging 42 points, fourth-best in the Big 12 and 12th in the nation.

NEBRASKA-MISSOURI NOTES

PURIFY'S PERSONAL TRAGEDY

Senior wide receiver Maurice Purify's availability for the game was in doubt throughout the week. Purify's girlfriend, 20-year-old Reia Shapiro, died in a one-car accident in southern California on the day of the Cornhuskers' game against Iowa State. Shapiro was a student at Pasadena City College.

"It just stinks," quarterback Sam Keller said when asked about it. "It really does. There's no other way to put it. You're talking about something that's life. I mean, we're talking about football here, and that's the coolest, funnest thing to talk about, and then life happens. You just feel for the guy. All I can do is be there for him, just like the rest of the team and the coaching staff."

Purify's brother, Ronald Spears, was shot to death in Oakland, Calif., in late August.

RUNNING THE SCOUT TEAM

Sophomore Zac Lee, who appears to be headed for a redshirt, directed the scout-squad offense in preparation for the Tigers — and apparently directed it well in his role as Chase Daniel.

Defensive coordinator Kevin Cosgrove complemented Lee on his strength as a passer. Offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach Shawn Watson agreed, with a qualification.

"He's got a quick trigger and is a heck of a passer," said Watson. However, if he were to say Lee had the strongest arm among the Cornhusker quarterbacks, "the four other guys would want to fight me."

"He's got a strong arm; let's put it like that. He would be in the strongest category."

TRAVEL

Junior defensive tackle Ty Steinkuhler and junior defensive end Clayton Sievers were not included on the Cornhuskers' 70-player travel roster. Both are sidelined by injuries.

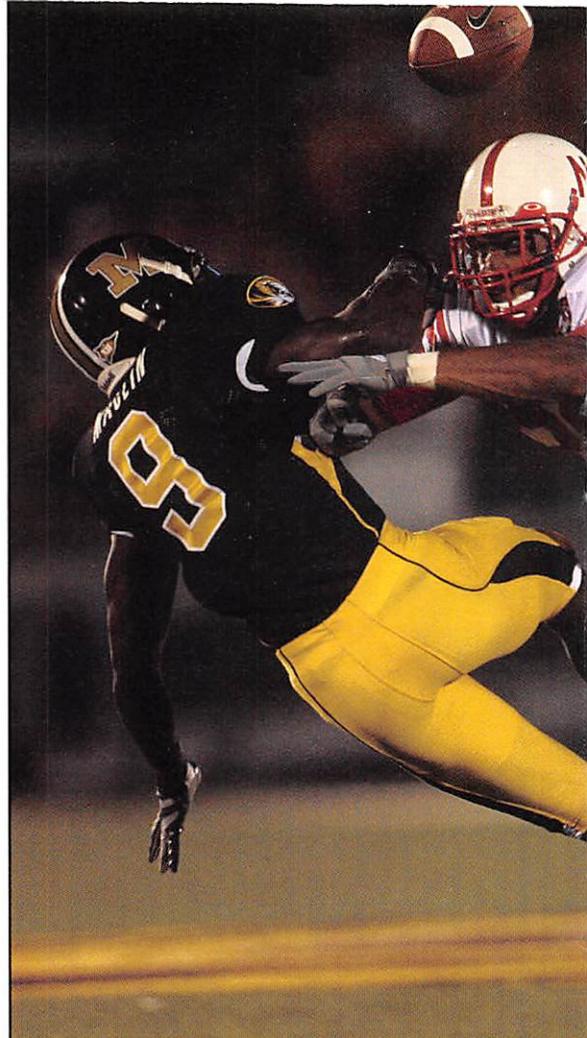
DEFENSE — (End) Pierre Allen, Andy Poulosky, Zach Potter, Barry Turner; (Tackle) Shukree Barfield, Kevin Dixon, Brandon Johnson, Ben Martin, Ndadumkong Suh; (Linebacker) Lance Brandenburgh, Major Culbert, Phillip Dillard, Blake Lawrence, Corey McKeon, Steve Octavien, Bo Ruud, Latravis Washington, Tyler Wortman; (Cornerback) Prince Amukamara, Anthony Blue, Zack Bowman, Cortney Grixby, Andre Jones, Armando Murillo, Anthony West; (Safety) Larry Asante, Ben Eisenhart, Tierre Green, Eric Hagg, Matt O'Hanlon, Rickey Thenarise, Bryan Wilson.

OFFENSE — (Wide receiver) Dan Erickson, Frantz Hardy, Menelik Holt, Terrence Nunn, Niles Paul, Todd Peterson, Maurice Purify, Nate Swift; (Tight end) Sean Hill, Mike McNeill, Josh Mueller, J.B. Phillips, Hunter Teafatiller; (Offensive line) Brett Byford, Jacob Hickman, Mike Huff, D.J. Jones, Lydon Murtha, Carl Nicks, Jordan Picou, Matt Sluson, Mike Smith, Keith Williams; (Quarterback) Joe Ganz, Sam Keller, Patrick Witt; (I-back) Quentin Castille, Cody Glenn, Roy Helu, Marlon Lucky; (Fullback) Thomas Lawson, Andy Sand.

SPECIALISTS — (Long-snap) Justin Baumgartner, T.J. O'Leary; (Place-kick) Alex Henery, Adi Kunalic, Jake Wesch; (Punt) Dan Titchener.

BRIEFLY

- Senior cornerback Andre Jones was back in action after missing the Iowa State game because of a suspension for unspecified reasons.
- The Kansas City Star quoted Missouri safety "Pig" Brown as saying of the Cornhuskers, "We've got to kill those guys. I just want to kill them. We need to beat them by three touchdowns or more."
- The loss ended Nebraska's eight-game winning streak against the Big 12 North Division, dating to the 2005 season.
- Nebraska has now lost its last three games at Columbia. The home team has won the past six games in the series, dating to the Cornhuskers' 36-3 victory at Columbia in 2001.
- Nebraska still has dominated the series, one of college football's oldest, 63-34-3.
- Missouri was ranked higher than the Cornhuskers for the second consecutive year but for the first time at Columbia since 1969, when the No. 7 Tigers defeated No. 20 Nebraska 17-7.
- Nebraska and Missouri are now tied at 5-5 in games in which both teams were ranked in the Associated Press Top 25. The Cornhuskers won the last time, 20-13 in 1978.
- Nebraska's roster includes four players from Missouri: wide receiver Chris Brooks (St. Louis), tight end Mike McNeill (Kirkwood), offensive lineman Keith Williams (Florissant) and place-kicker Daniel Lee (Kansas City). Lee, a transfer from Vanderbilt, is redshirting.
- The game's 8:15 p.m. start time for ESPN was the latest a Nebraska game had begun since 1996, when the Cornhuskers lost at Arizona State 19-0. That game began after 9 p.m. Lincoln time. ■



Nebraska's Tierre Green (30) knocks the ball away from Miss

sure the Cornhuskers' first play from scrimmage was an indication of what was about to happen in a place that once considered winning against Nebraska worth some destruction of university property, beginning with the goal posts.

Cortney Grixby returned the kickoff after Missouri's first touchdown 22 yards to the Cornhusker 30-yard line. Before Nebraska could run a play, however, it was penalized for a false start.

"We have to stay poised as a unit," Keller said. "I take that on myself, too. It has to come down to focus. It really does. We have to be ready for that situation. We need to really buckle down."

"I think it just comes down to me being louder. We just have to be prepared."

By then, the noise had subsided, more quickly than usual, and not because of the late hour. ■



NU I-back Marlon Luck



Missouri's Jeremy Maclin (9) as Lance Brandenburgh (40) moves in.



... looks for running room. Lucky had 17 carries for 67 yards.

WHO STOOD OUT?

OFFENSE

All things considered, Nebraska's receivers played well, coach Bill Callahan said. "We just didn't see enough consistency across the board." He mentioned Maurice Purify, Nate Swift and Marlon Lucky, in particular. Lucky again led the way with seven catches for 56 yards. He also rushed for 67 yards. Purify's availability was in question throughout the week because of the death of his girlfriend in California the previous Saturday. But he played and caught five passes. Swift and tight end Sean Hill each caught four passes.



Maurice Purify

DEFENSE

Crediting anyone on a defense that allows 606 yards and 41 points might seem incongruous. But linebacker Lance Brandenburgh did stand out with his effort. The junior from Overland Park, Kan., was credited with 10 tackles, as was linebacker Bo Ruud. "I felt we had a good game plan going in," said Brandenburgh. And the mistakes the Cornhuskers made on defense are "correctable." Cornerback Zack Bowman made eight tackles, and punter Dan Titchener was credited with six tackles, a total that might come as a surprise. He wears No. 97 as does defensive tackle Kevin Dixon — who was credited with one assist.



L. Brandenburgh

SPECIAL TEAMS



Alex Henery
opportunities.

Redshirted freshman Alex Henery kicked two field goals and is now five-for-five on the season. Adi Kunalic put two of his three kickoffs in the end zone for touchbacks, a good thing considering the Tigers' Jeremy Maclin is a breakaway threat. And Courtney Grixby did well returning kicks, and he had plenty of opportunities.

INJURY REPORT

Junior defensive tackle Ty Steinkuhler and junior defensive end Clayton Sievers didn't make the trip to Columbia because of injuries. Tony Temple, Missouri's leading rushing for the season (and No. 6 in the conference) left the game with an injury and didn't return. He carried only three times. But the Tigers were still able to run the ball effectively.

GAME STATS

SCORING

Oct. 6, 2007
 Faurot Field Columbia, Mo.
 Attendance 70,049

	1	2	3	4	F
Nebraska	3	3	0	0	6
Missouri	14	6	14	7	41

First Quarter

	NU	MU
MU Daniel 1-yard Run (Wolfert Kick) 10:15	0	7
Drive: 12 plays 80 yds 4:45		
MU Coffman Pass from Daniel 6-yards (Wolfert Kick) 04:57	0	14
Drive: 11 plays 79 yds 3:04		
NU Henery 26-yard Field Goal 00:49	3	14
Drive: 10 plays 53 yds 4:00		

Second Quarter

	NU	MU
MU Wolfert 23-yard Field Goal 05:28	3	17
Drive: 12 plays 75 yds 4:32		

	NU	MU
NU Henery 39-yard Field Goal 01:51	6	17
Drive: 14 plays 54 yds 3:32		

	NU	MU
MU Wolfert 33-yard Field Goal 00:09	6	20
Drive: 10 plays 55 yds 1:35		

Third Quarter

	NU	MU
MU Daniel 3-yard Run (Wolfert Kick) 11:08	6	27
Drive: 6 plays 64 yds 2:03		

	NU	MU
MU Alexander Pass from Daniel 48-yards (Wolfert Kick) 06:51	6	34
Drive: 6 plays 79 yds 1:32		

Fourth Quarter

	NU	MU
MU Rucker Pass from Saunders 10-yards (Wolfert Kick) 12:52	6	41
Drive: 12 plays 67 yds 4:50		

TEAM STATS

	NU	MU
Total First Downs	20	32
Rushing	4	8
Passing	14	20

	NU	MU
Penalty	2	4
Rushing Attempts	25	36

	NU	MU
Yards Gained Rushing	89	198
Yards Lost Rushing	15	3

	NU	MU
Net Yards Rushing	74	195
Net Yards Passing	223	411

	NU	MU
Passes Attempted	43	49
Passes Completed	25	34

	NU	MU
Had Intercepted	1	0
Percent Completion	58.1%	69.4%

	NU	MU
Yards per Attempt	5.2	8.4
Yards per Completion	8.9	12.1

	NU	MU
Total Offensive Plays	68	85
Total Net Yards	297	606

	NU	MU
Avg. Gain Per Play	4.4	7.1
Fumbles: No-Lost	1-0	0-0

	NU	MU
Penalties: No-Yards	10-57	9-79
Punts: No-Yards	5-214	2-92

	NU	MU
Avg. Per Punt	42.8	46.0
Avg. Net Punt	41.2	46.0

	NU	MU
Punt Returns: No-Yards	0-0	1-8
Kickoff Returns: No-Yards	8-167	1-26

	NU	MU
Interception Returns: No-Yards	0-0	1-0
Fumble Returns: No-Yards	0-0	0-0

	NU	MU
Miscellaneous Yards	0	0
Possession Time	28:20	31:40

	NU	MU
Third-Down Conversions	6-16	10-15
Percentage	37.5%	66.7%

	NU	MU
Fourth-Down Conversions	0-1	1-1
Percentage	0.0%	100.0%

	NU	MU
Sacks By: No-Yards	0-0	2-12



The Nebraska defense chases Missouri quarterback Chase Daniel (left), who passed for 401 yards and rushed for 72.

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

NEBRASKA

RUSHING						
No	Gain	Lost	Net	Avg	TD	Lg
Lucky	17	70	3	67	3.9	0
Purify	1	8	0	8	8.0	0
Nunn	1	4	0	4	4.0	0
Glenn	2	1	0	1	0.5	0
Keller	4	6	12	-6	-1.5	0
Total	25	89	15	74	3.0	0

PASSING						
Att	Comp	%	Int	Yds	TD	Lg
Keller	43	25	58.1	1	223	0
Total	43	25	58.1	1	223	0

RECEIVING						
No	Yds	TD	Lg			
Lucky	7	56	0	18		
Swift	4	50	0	17		
Hill	4	45	0	15		
Purify	5	40	0	14		
Hardy	2	20	0	12		
Erickson	1	6	0	6		
Glenn	2	6	0	6		
Total	25	223	0	18		

PUNT RETURNS						
No	Yds	TD	Lg			
Grixby	5	120	0	35		
Jones	1	26	0	26		
Tefatiller	2	21	0	11		
Total	8	167	0	35		

KICKOFF RETURNS						
No	Yds	TD	Lg			
Maclin	1	26	0	26		
Total	1	26	0	26		

MISSOURI

RUSHING						
No	Gain	Lost	Net	Avg	TD	Lg
Daniel	11	72	0	72	6.5	2
Maclin	6	53	0	53	8.8	0
Washington	3	18	0	18	6.0	0
Goldsmith	3	17	0	17	5.7	0
Patton	2	14	0	14	7.0	0
Woods	2	11	0	11	5.5	0
Jackson	3	8	0	8	2.7	0
Rucker	3	5	1	4	1.3	0
Temple	3	0	2	-2	-0.7	0
Total	36	198	3	195	5.4	2

PASSING		
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2007 SEASON STATS

RUSHING

	G	No Gain	Lost	Net	Avg	TD	Lg	Yd/G
Lucky, Marlon	6	125	658	26	632	5.1	6	41
Castille, Quentin	6	30	122	0	122	4.1	3	18
Glenn, Cody	4	26	86	9	77	3.0	2	20
Helu, Roy	2	10	39	0	39	3.9	0	13
Culbert, Major	4	5	35	0	35	7.0	1	17
Ganz, Joe	2	2	15	0	15	7.5	0	9
Purify, Maurice	5	1	8	0	8	8.0	0	8
Nunn, Terrence	6	3	4	14	-10	-3.3	0	4
Keller, Sam	6	17	19	51	-32	-1.9	0	4
								-5.3

PASSING

	G	Att	Comp	% Int	Yds	TD	Lg	YD/G
Keller, Sam	6	228	146	64.0	8	1720	9	73
Lucky, Marlon	6	1	1	100.0	0	20	1	20
Ganz, Joe	2	1	1	100.0	0	19	0	19

RECEIVING

	G	No	Yds	Avg	TD	Lg	Yd/G
Purify, Maurice	5	24	308	12.8	1	38	61.6
Lucky, Marlon	6	35	261	7.5	1	20	43.5
Swift, Nate	6	20	256	12.8	1	21	42.7
Hill, Sean	6	11	229	20.8	3	73	38.2
Nunn, Terrence	6	17	219	12.9	0	30	36.5
Hardy, Frantz	6	9	142	15.8	0	60	23.7
Peterson, Todd	6	9	125	13.9	2	21	20.8
Glenn, Cody	4	6	52	8.7	0	19	13.0
Erickson, Dan	6	4	46	11.5	0	19	7.7
McNeill, Mike	3	1	25	25.0	0	25	8.3
Teafatiller, Hunter	5	3	21	7.0	0	11	4.2
Castille, Quentin	6	1	15	15.0	0	15	2.5
Sand, Andy	6	1	15	15.0	0	15	2.5
Young, Drew	4	1	14	14.0	0	14	3.5
Lawson, Thomas	4	2	10	5.0	2	6	2.5
Paul, Niles	3	1	6	6.0	0	6	2.0
Phillips, J.B.	6	1	6	6.0	0	6	1.0
Helu, Roy	2	1	5	5.0	0	5	2.5
Brooks, Chris	1	1	4	4.0	0	4	4.0

PUNT RETURNS

	G	No	Yds	Avg	TD	Lg	Yd/G
Grixby, Cortney	6	7	36	5.1	0	16	6.0
Jones, Andre	5	2	25	12.5	0	24	5.0
Nunn, Terrence	6	1	0	0.0	0	0	0.0

KICKOFF RETURNS LEADERS

	G	No	Yds	Avg	TD	Lg	Yd/G
Grixby, Cortney	6	22	559	25.4	0	51	93.2
Jones, Andre	5	8	175	21.9	0	31	35.0

PUNTING

	G	No	Avg	Lg	Blk	TB	FC	50+	In 20
Titchener, Dan	6	25	41.9	51	0	2	7	1	8
Henery, Alex	6	1	32.0	32	0	0	0	0	1

FIELD GOALS

	G	Att	Made	Lg	Blkd
Henery, Alex	6	5	5	39	0
Kunalic, Adi	6	1	1	46	0

DEFENSE LEADERS

	G	Tack	Ast	Tot	TFL	Sack	PD	FF	FR
Ruud, Bo	6	22	19	41	3-9	0-0	1	2	0
Octavien, Steve	6	27	10	37	5-28	0-4	2	0	0
Asante, Larry	6	15	20	35	0-0	0-0	1	1	0
Murillo, Armando	6	18	10	28	0-0	0-0	4	0	0
McKeon, Corey	6	13	14	27	3-6	0-0	3	0	1
Potter, Zach	6	15	12	27	7-17	2-10	0	1	1
Dillard, Phillip	6	17	9	26	0-0	0-0	2	0	0
Brandenburg, L.	6	17	8	25	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Bowman, Zackary	5	16	6	22	0-0	0-0	3	0	0

TEAM STATISTICS

NU

	NU	OPP
Total First Downs	146	136
Rushing	45	52
Passing	87	73
Penalty	14	11
Total Net Yards	2636	2649
Total Plays	453	462
Yards Per Play	5.8	5.7
Yards Per Game	439.3	441.5
Rushing Attempts-Yards	223-877	238-1143
Yards Per Attempt	3.9	4.8
Yards Per Game	146.2	190.5
Pass Att-Comp-Int.	230-148-8	224-126-7
Passing Yards	1759	1506
Yards Per Completion	11.9	12.0
Yards Per Game	293.2	251.0
Punting: No.-Avg.	26-41.5	30-41.2
Fumbles-Lost	7-5	11-3
Penalties-Yards	38-293	42-357
Sacks By-Yds. Lost	6-34	7-45
Third-Down Conversions	39-88	43-95
Conversion Pct.	44.3	45.3
Fourth-Down Conversions	4-7	6-9
Conversion Pct.	57.1	66.7
Avg. Time Of Possession	30:16	29:44
Scoring	1st	2nd
Nebaska	27	51
Opponents	24	57
	59	63
	48	30
	0	0
	185	174

2007 RESULTS, SCHEDULE

1 Sept. 1	Nevada (2-3), W 52-10	1-0
2 Sept. 8	@Wake Forest (3-2), W 20-17	2-0
3 Sept. 15	USC (4-1), L 49-31	2-1
4 Sept. 22	Ball State (3-3), W 41-40	3-1
5 Sept. 29	Iowa State (1-4), W 35-17	4-1
6 Oct. 6	@Missouri (5-0), L 41-6	4-2
7 Oct. 13	Oklahoma St. (3-3), 11:30 a.m., FSN PPV	
8 Oct. 20	Texas A&M (5-1), TBA	
9 Oct. 27	@Texas (4-2), TBA	
10 Nov. 3	@Kansas (5-0), TBA	
11 Nov. 10	Kansas State (3-2), TBA	
12 Nov. 23	@Colorado (4-2), 11 a.m., ABC	
Dec. 1	Big 12 Championship at San Antonio, Texas, 7 p.m., ABC	

SCOUTING REPORT

GAME 7

Oklahoma State

Oct. 13

Location: Stillwater, Okla.

Enrollment: 31,800

2007 record: 3-3

Coach: Mike Gundy, 3rd

year

Series: Nebraska leads 36-4-1



11:30 a.m., FSN Pay-Per-View

Memorial Stadium, Lincoln, Neb.

Quick Facts

Oklahoma State blew a 17-0 half-time lead as Texas A&M rallied for a 24-23 victory in College Station.

OSU shut out a Big 12 Conference opponent in the first half for the first time since holding

Baylor to zero points in the first half on Nov. 13, 2004.

The Cowboys finished with 259 yards passing and 200 yards rushing. It is the fourth time in the last five games that the Cowboys have reached the 200-200 mark.



Wide receiver Adarius Bowman has continued to put up big numbers after a breakout season in 2006, when he finished with 1,181 yards and 12 touchdowns, earning him Big 12 offensive newcomer of the year honors. This season, the transfer from North Carolina has 38 catches for 621 yards and six touchdowns.

BIG 12 AT A GLANCE

North

South

	W	L	W	L	W	L	W	L
Colorado	2	0	4	2	2	0	5	1
Kansas	1	0	5	0	0	1	1	5
Missouri	1	0	5	0	1	1	5	1
Nebraska	1	1	4	2	1	1	3	3
Kansas St.	1	1	3	2	0	2	4	2
Iowa State	0	2	1	5	0	2	3	3

Saturday, Oct. 6

Missouri 41, Nebraska 6

Kansas 30, Kansas State 24

Colorado 43, Baylor 23

Texas Tech 42, Iowa State 17

Oklahoma 28, Texas 21

Texas A&M 24, Oklahoma State 23

ON DECK

Texas A&M

Oct. 20

Location: College Station, Texas

Enrollment: 46,587

2007 record: 5-1

Coach: Dennis Franchione, 5th year

Series: Nebraska leads 10-2

Time TBA

Memorial Stadium, Lincoln, Neb.

TENTATIVE 2-DEEPS

NEBRASKA OFFENSE

WR	87	Nate Swift**	6-2	200	Jr.
	16	Maurice Purify*	6-4	220	Sr.
LT	77	Carl Nicks*	6-5	330	Sr.
	65	Mike Smith	6-6	285	RFr.
LG	57	Jacob Hickman*	6-4	285	So.
	69	Jordan Picou	6-2	305	Sr.
C	59	Brett Byford*	6-3	300	Sr.
	67	Jacob Hickman*	6-4	285	So.
RG	70	Matt Slauson**	6-5	335	Jr.
	61	Mike Huff**	6-4	300	Jr.
RT	76	Lydon Murtha**	6-7	305	Jr.
	73	D.J. Jones	6-5	310	RFr.
HB	88	J.B. Phillips***	6-3	245	Sr.
	86	Sean Hill	6-3	250	Sr.
WR	83	Terrence Nunn***	6-0	190	Sr.
	7	Frantz Hardy**	6-1	190	Sr.
QB	9	Sam Keller	6-4	230	Sr.
	12	Joe Ganz*	6-1	200	Jr.
FB	36	Thomas Lawson*	6-0	240	Jr.
	48	Andy Sand	6-2	230	Sr.
IB	5	Marlon Lucky**	6-0	210	Sr.
	34	Cody Glenn	6-0	230	Jr.
PK	90	Alex Henery	6-2	170	RFr.

NEBRASKA DEFENSE

DE	99	Barry Turner**	6-3	270	Jr.
	88	Clayton Sievers**	6-4	245	Sr.
NT	93	Ndamukong Suh*	6-4	305	So.
	56	Shukree Barfield	6-4	310	Jr.
DT	43	Ty Steinkuhler**	6-3	285	Jr.
	97	Kevin Dixon	6-3	295	Jr.
DE	98	Zach Potter**	6-7	280	Jr.
	95	Pierre Allen	6-5	265	RFr.
SLB	51	Bo Ruedt***	6-3	235	Sr.
	12	Blak Lawrence	6-2	220	Fr.
MLB	13	Corey McKeon**	6-1	225	Sr.
	52	Phillip Dillard*	6-1	250	So.
WLB	15	Steve Octavien*	6-0	240	Sr.
	40	Lance Brandenburgh***	6-1	230	Sr.
LCB	5	Armando Murillo	6-0	195	Jr.
	25	Andre Jones*	6-0	190	Sr.
FS	30	Tierre Green***	6-1	200	Sr.
	3	Rickey Thenar*	6-0	190	So.
SS	4	Larry Asante	6-1	210	So.
	9	Bryan Wilson*	6-1	205	Sr.
RCB	1	Zack Bowman*	6-2	200	Sr.
	2	Cortney Gribby***	5-9	170	Sr.
P	97	Dan Titchener*	6-0	200	Jr.

OKLAHOMA STATE OFFENSE

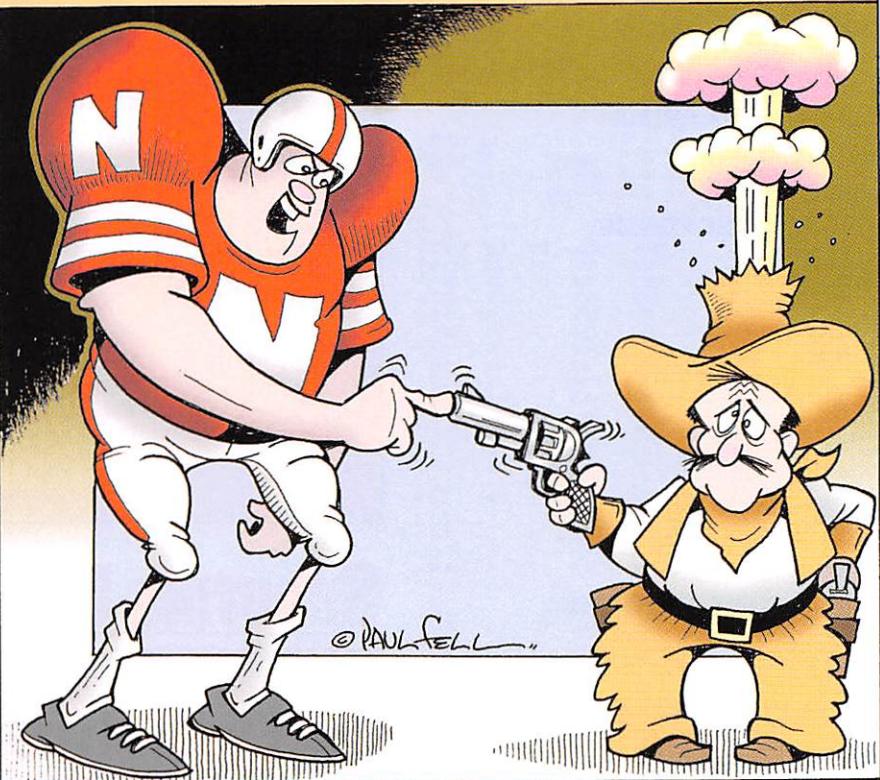
WR	12	Adarius Bowman*	6-4	220	Sr.
	80	DeMarcus Conner	6-1	200	So.
LT	76	Russell Okung*	6-5	290	So.
	67	Jerry Palmoore	6-6	305	Jr.
LG	61	David Koenig***	6-5	295	Sr.
	77	Noah Franklin	6-5	310	So.
C	54	Andrew Lewis	6-5	295	So.
	74	Grant Garner	6-3	280	Fr.
RG	65	Steve Denning	6-5	295	Jr.
	52	Andrew Lawrence	6-4	305	So.
RT	60	Brady Bond*	6-6	290	So.
	71	Trent Perkins	6-5	300	RFr.
TE	87	Brandon Pettigrew*	6-6	260	Jr.
	82	Justin Waller**	6-4	245	Jr.
WR	9	Jeremy Broadway*	6-0	195	So.
	1	Dez Bryant	6-2	210	Fr.
QB	11	Zac Robinson*	6-3	205	So.
	14	Bobby Reid**	6-3	235	Jr.
RB	22	Dantrell Savage*	5-9	195	Sr.
	24	Kendall Hunter	5-8	180	Fr.
FB	33	John Johnson	6-1	245	Jr.
	47	Jeremiah Burton	6-1	240	Jr.
PK	85	Jason Ricks**	6-2	200	Jr.

OKLAHOMA STATE DEFENSE

DE	97	Marque Fountain***	6-2	260	Sr.
	98	Derek Burton*	6-5	265	So.
NT	92	Tonga Tea Jr.	6-0	310	Jr.
	96	Jeray Chatham**	6-3	280	Jr.
DT	56	Maurice Cummings***	6-4	275	Sr.
	94	Quencey Patrick	6-3	275	RFr.
DE	13	Nathan Peterson***	6-2	240	Sr.
	2	Rodrick Johnson***	6-3	255	Sr.
OLB	8	Donovan Woods***	6-2	230	Sr.
	41	Orie Lemon	6-1	240	So.
MLB	44	Chris Collins*	6-2	235	So.
	35	Marcus Brown*	6-2	240	Jr.
OLB	4	Patrick Lavine*	6-3	225	So.
	19	Jeremy Nethon***	6-0	225	Sr.
CB	17	Jacob Lacey**	5-11	175	Jr.
	16	Perrish Cox*	6-1	190	So.
FS	6	Ricky Price**	6-1	195	Jr.
	26	Quinton Moore*	5-11	185	Jr.
SS	20	Andre Sexton*	6-1	210	So.
	25	Clint Coe	6-2	195	Sr.
CB	7	Marotel Van Zant***	6-1	210	Sr.
	27	Carl Mickens**	6-2	195	Jr.
P	18	Matt Fodge**	6-1	195	Jr.

THE PAUL FELL PREDICTION

NEBRASKA VS. OKLAHOMA STATE



OCTOBER 13, 2007

THE COWPOKE PLAN TO SHOOT DOWN THE HUSKER
HOMECOMING CELEBRATION BLOWS UP INSTEAD!

PICKS

Oct.
13



Brian Hill
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Mike Babcock
Cont. Editor



Terry Douglass
G.I. Independent



Sean Callahan
KFAB/Rivals.com



Merlin Klaus
WOWT-Omaha
(Guest)

Oklahoma State @ Nebraska

Nebraska 38,
Oka. St. 34

Nebraska 42,
Oka. St. 38

Nebraska 35,
Oka. St. 24

Nebraska 41,
Oka. St. 31

Nebraska 34,
Oka. St. 24

Missouri @ Oklahoma

Oklahoma 30,
Missouri 24

Oklahoma 35,
Missouri 21

Oklahoma 24,
Missouri 3

Oklahoma 48,
Missouri 34

Oklahoma 38,
Missouri 23

Colorado @ Kansas State

Kansas St. 20,
Colorado 17

Kansas St. 21,
Colorado 10

Kansas St. 17,
Colorado 10

Kansas St. 27,
Colorado 24

Kansas St. 20,
Colorado 10

LSU @ Kentucky

LSU 27,
Kentucky 20

LSU 28,
Kentucky 24

LSU 44,
Kentucky 24

LSU 38,
Kentucky 35

LSU 31,
Kentucky 27

Last Week Season

1-3
14-10

3-1
19-5

3-1
17-7

3-1
19-5

3-1
16-8

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'Stabilizer' A



***Junior Gates
an important
role player
for Huskers***

By Bob Hamar

Amanda Gates is a giver. She gives her time, effort and everything else she has to the Nebraska volleyball team. Gates isn't a star, and may never be, but the junior middle blocker from Columbus is an important role player for the Huskers.

Gates is what coach John Cook calls a "stabilizer," a player who waits in the wings and is ready when they get their chance.

"You have what I call 'aircraft craft carriers,' you have your winners and your competitors," Cook said. "Then you have your stabilizers, your role players, those people who are going to work hard and give to the team."

Cook actually looks for players like Gates when he recruits. You can't have a team and a bench full of aircraft carriers. If you do, someone isn't going to be happy.

"You can learn a lot through the interaction of recruiting," Cook said. "For example, Amanda, if there's somebody's birthday she'll make them a birthday card. When she was in high school, she would send us her prom picture with a note, just always thinking about other people first."

Gates may be a giver, but she's also a competitor and wants to be on the court. She started 11 matches last season during Nebraska's national championship run, most of those early in the season.

Junior middle blocker Amanda Gates was called on to start the Texas A&M match and responded with a career-high eight kills.

Iways Ready

" . . . Then you have your stabilizers, your role players, those people who are going to work hard and give to the team."

— NU coach John Cook

Gates didn't play a lot during the 2006 postseason, but she replaced a struggling Kori Cooper in the national championship match and got a big kill, two blocks and one spectacular save under the net that led to a Nebraska point.

"I'm confident in my abilities, but it's not always easy to be confident," Gates said. "When you haven't seen the court for a while, you just have to believe you can do it because you've done it before. You just make plays. You want to be the girl making plays."

Gates always has the best interests of the team in mind. When you play for Nebraska, the ultimate goal is always a national championship. That's what keeps Gates going.

"It's for the team," Gates said. "You have to understand your role. The bigger picture is winning a national championship. Whatever you have to sacrifice to do that, you find a way to do it, and you bring it every day in practice."

"It's competitive every day in practice. Sometimes you don't get on the court, but you work as hard, so you know you've done everything you can control."

Gates didn't play much the early part of this season. She had just five kills in Nebraska's first nine matches, but when Cooper came down with a viral infection late in September, Gates was ready to step in.

Gates started the Texas A&M match Sept. 22 in place of Cooper and responded with a career high eight kills on .429 hitting with a pair of blocks.

Gates said she knows she has to be

ready to play in every match.

"I've been trying to do that my whole career, just always preparing like I'm going to go in," Gates said. "You can never let up. You just have to be ready to go. Hopefully it pays off when I go in. I just have to keep working hard."

The Husker players certainly understand the importance of Gates and the other bench players.

"We've got great depth," Cooper said. "That shows. Even if somebody does go down, we still have another person there who can get a kill. That's really important, and that's why we play so well as a team, because we have so much depth. We have players who step in, and everybody plays their role. That's what makes our team work."

"It's great that we have Amanda there to step in and do a great job. That shows the depth of our team."

Cook calls Gates the "ultimate team player," who is ready whenever she's needed.

"We always talk to them about how your role players handle their roles determines how good a team you're going to be," Cook said. "Amanda embraces whatever role she has. When she gets her chance, she does great."

"It's really rewarding as a coach to see that. She's a great example for the rest of our players, but also our team trusts her a lot. When she goes in, I don't think we really miss a beat."

Cooper returned to the lineup Sept. 29 and immediately slammed 15 kills and hit over .700 against Baylor. Cooper has taken control of that position and is a solid No. 1, but if Gates is needed again, you know she'll be ready to go.

That's because Gates remembers what it was like to win a national title, and she wants to have that feeling again.

"I can't even describe the moment after winning a national champi-

onship," Gates said. "But I know one thing: Nobody can ever take that away from you. It's just something that will be with you forever. I can't even explain what a great feeling it is." ■

Bob Hamar covers the Nebraska volleyball team for the Grand Island (Neb.) Independent. He can be reached at bob.hamar@theindependent.com

RESULTS, SCHEDULE

AVCA Showcase At Qwest Center Omaha		
Aug. 24	vs. Tennessee	W 3-0
Aug. 25	vs. UCLA	W 3-1
Holiday Inn Classic NU Coliseum/Qwest Center Omaha		
Aug. 31	vs. Creighton (NU)	W 3-0
Sept. 2	vs. Penn St. (Omaha)	W 3-0
Sept. 3	vs. Cal Poly (NU)	W 3-0

Ameritas Players Challenge NU Coliseum

Sept. 7	vs. Duke	W 3-0
Sept. 8	vs. New Mexico St.	W 3-0

(Home matches at NU Coliseum, unless noted)

Sept. 12	Texas	W 3-0
Sept. 15	@Texas Tech	W 3-0
Sept. 22	Texas A&M	W 3-0
Sept. 26	@Kansas	W 3-0
Sept. 29	Baylor	W 3-0
Oct. 3	Kansas State	W 3-0
Oct. 6	@Colorado	7:30 p.m.
Oct. 10	Iowa State	7 p.m.
Oct. 13	@Oklahoma	1 p.m.
Oct. 17	@Missouri	6:30 p.m.
Oct. 20	Kansas	TBA
Oct. 21	Hawaii (Devaney)	5 p.m.
Oct. 24	@Texas	6:30 p.m.
Oct. 31	Missouri	7 p.m.
Nov. 3	@Kansas State	7 p.m.
Nov. 7	Colorado	7 p.m.
Nov. 11	@Iowa State	3 p.m.
Nov. 14	@Texas A&M	6:30 p.m.
Nov. 17	Oklahoma	7 p.m.
Nov. 21	@Baylor	6:30 p.m.
Nov. 24	Texas Tech	7 p.m.

Nov. 29-Dec. 2 NCAA First/Second Rounds At Campus Sites

Dec. 7-8 NCAA Regionals At Campus Sites

Dec. 13-15 NCAA Final Four At Sacramento, Calif.

She Knew She wanted to Pitch

***Husker junior Hill
got an early start
on her softball career***

By KATELYN KERKHOVE

It was just a simple game of catch.

Molly Hill, her parents and her brother would walk out to the ballpark right by their house in Carroll, Neb., and play catch. It was a simple game, but there was something interesting about it — Hill could really throw.

These games started when Hill was 6-years-old. By the time she was 8, she was staying after her softball games to watch the "big girls" play. The first time she stopped to watch from behind the fence she was awestruck by the teams' pitchers.

"I just knew I wanted to do that," Hill said. "It was fun, (to be) the center of attention, (to) get to touch the ball every time. So I went home and told my dad. He started catching for me right away."

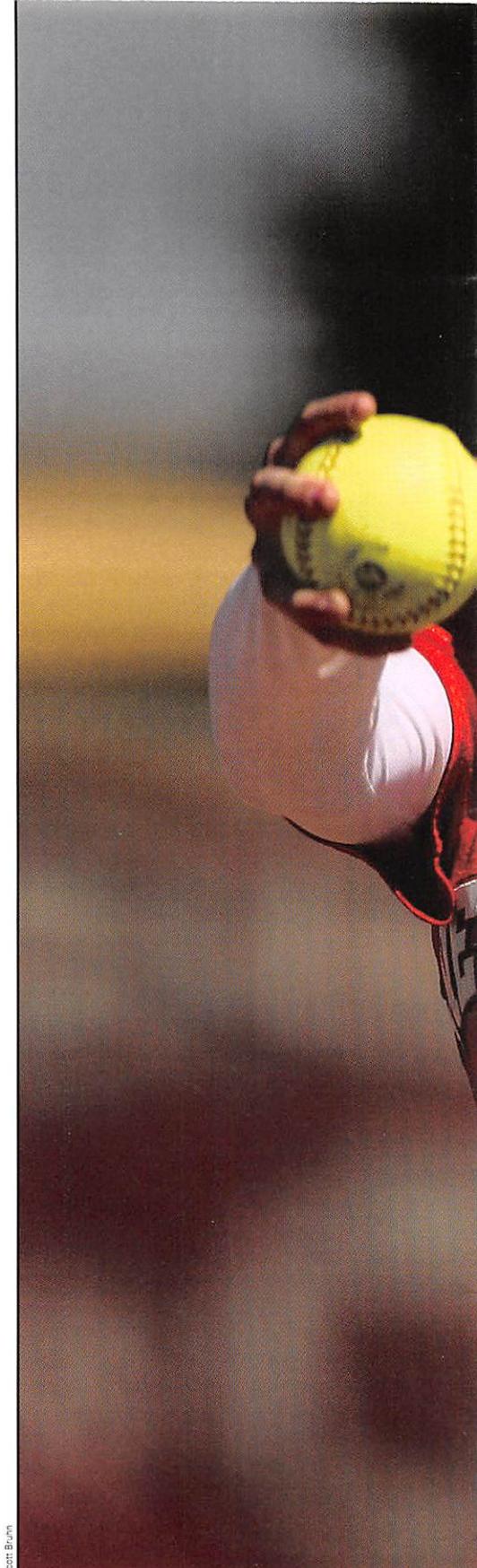
It wasn't until Hill was 10 that she actually saw the mound. She remembers her first game, not because she struck someone out for the first time ever, but rather because she walked so many batters.

Working her way up the ranks, Hill was seeing the mound for her Wayne (Neb.) High School varsity team and other club teams by her sophomore year. That's when Nebraska coach Rhonda Revelle made her first appearance.

"I played for a team out of Lincoln and we were at an Omaha tournament, and Coach Revelle showed up at one of our games," Hill said. "I was really excited. I didn't ever find out who she was there to watch, but I pitched well. She showed up at my state tournament games the next year, so I kind of had a feeling."

When Revelle heard this, she just laughed. "That's just Molly," she said. "It's like, who else would I be there to watch? She was the most touted pitcher in the state at that time!"

This humble and naive attitude toward her talent is something Hill has worked with since they met. Revelle said. During her career at Nebraska so far, Hill has made a name for herself as a Cornhusker and as a Big 12 Conference athlete.



Hill opened fall play by tossing two shutouts against Nebraska-Omaha.

In 2007, she posted the lowest earned-run average in the Big 12 at 1.05. She was the fourth underclassman to lead the league in ERA since



Molly Hill became the second Nebraska pitcher to lead the Big 12 in ERA, finishing at 1.05 last season as a sophomore.

the league was formed in 1996. Her ERA also ranked ninth nationally.

You wouldn't know it, however.

There isn't a moment that stands out to Revelle as being THE moment

of Hill's improvement, nor is there a shocking series or a grand play. It's been many moments over the course of the last few years that have shown Hill's abilities, and all of them make

her one of the Huskers' go-to pitchers.

"I really think it's been more of a progression more than an 'ah ha' moment," Revelle said. "She's been very relentless in this pursuit of developing into this complete pitcher — physically, emotionally and intellectually. I think that's the 'ah ha,' just attacking every aspect of her pitching."

One aspect Revelle said that makes Hill stand out is her ability to slow down the game mentally. Pitching isn't just about throwing hard, it's about understanding and reading batters, positioning and pitching strategy. For Hill, this is something she's learned from Revelle and from watching former Nebraska pitcher and three-time all-conference honoree Ashley DeBuhr, who graduated last year.

As her talents continue to develop, Hill said there is still one thing she fights with every game, something that has little to do with the technique of throwing the ball — nerves.

Standing on the mound today may seem different than years ago, but it still brings the adrenaline that Hill can't shake. But she's learning to deal with that as well.

"I don't think I look like it any more," Hill said. "I've really worked on my breathing and slowing myself down. It relaxes your body. I've reached out to my teammates and learned how to keep myself in the moment through keeping them in the moment. I'm a lot better at that this year."

Revelle said Hill's battle with her nerves is something a lot of athletes deal with, especially when they are in high-pressure situations. The fact that Hill has been able to understand and conquer it is a great sign.

With everything Hill has been able to accomplish, Revelle said it's because of her dedication, something that makes her a great leader and team captain — even though Hill would never admit it.

"She pretty much stays the course, keeps her eyes on her target, but I told her, her work on and off the field is a great role model for everybody and anybody," Revelle said. "It comes across more loudly than you think it does and she's more of a leader than she gives herself credit." ■

Learning About Life

***Walk-on no longer
plays basketball
to be like Mike***

By Mike Babcock

When he was younger, Paul Velander thought he might play in the NBA someday. Most young players with an aptitude for the game envision such a future at some point, regardless of the odds. And Velander was no different.

"In the back of my mind I was thinking, 'It's possible,'" he said.

After all, he was successful. And he had a proper role model in Michael Jordan.

Velander wanted to be like Mike, growing up in Blacksburg, Va. The Nebraska junior was a "very serious" soccer player as a youngster but gave up the sport. The reason?

"Michael Jordan didn't play soccer," he said.

"I played all sports when I was young. As soon as I could play catch or throw a ball, I was playing. But I chose basketball as my main sport because of Michael Jordan and the Bulls."

That Jordan played for the Chicago Bulls might have had something to do with it. Velander has family in the Chicago area. His parents met at Illinois Benedictine in Lisle, Ill. — they were students there at the same time Cornhusker football coach Bill Callahan was playing quarterback, in fact.

"Isn't it funny how that works?" said Velander.

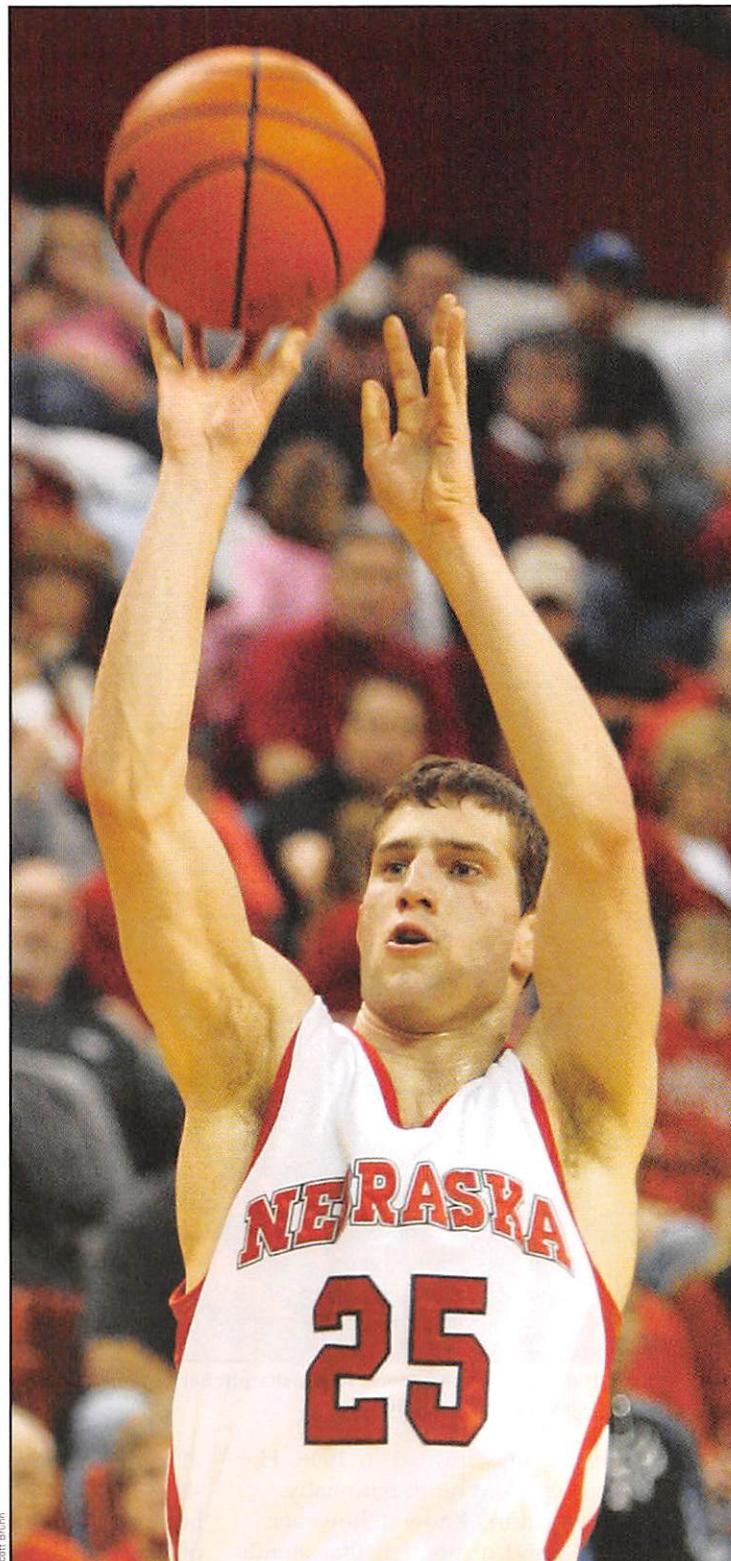
Anyway, the Chicago-area connection might explain his interest in the Bulls, and Jordan specifically. But it goes beyond that. "Growing up watching him, he was like Superman," Velander said.

He no longer plays basketball to be like Mike, of course. And he doesn't play to retain a scholarship because he doesn't have one. He's a walk-on, paying his own way to play.

"I'm playing the game because there are a lot of benefits," he said. "You learn a lot about yourself. You learn about life. That's honestly why I'm playing. I realize my future's not in basketball."

"It's not the first reason I came here."

The first reason he came to Nebraska is family. His father, Bill, was a chemical engineering professor at Virginia Tech before taking a similar position at Nebraska.



Paul Velander hit 32 3-pointers last season as a sophomore.

Paul wanted to be close to family. "That was the only reason, really," he said.

His brother Chris is a high school student, and his sister Claire is a freshman at Nebraska. An older sister, Lauren, is still in Blacksburg, doing a medical internship.

Leaving Blacksburg was difficult. But the decision to do so wasn't.

"Family won out, bottom line, snap of the fingers," he said.

Velander redshirted his first season at Nebraska, then sat out most of his second season because of an ankle injury that required surgery. He played only 3 minutes in two games.

Last season, he played in 27 games, starting once. "I'm not the same player I used to be in terms of what I can do," he said. "I've had injuries. I've been knocked down."

"But I think I'm getting my athleticism back."

He was a four-year varsity starter in high school, scoring more than 1,000 career points and hitting better than 40-percent from 3-point range — a skill he provides Doc Sadler's team.

Even though he no longer aspires to continue playing beyond his college career, "I still put in the time, man," he said. Sadler wouldn't allow anything less, scholarship or not.

"Doc, one of his big slogans is: Don't cheat yourself. Don't cheat your teammates. And he told us when he came here he's not going to cheat us out of any moment," Velander said.

With him and five other walk-ons, plus the 13 healthy scholarship players, the "dynamics will be different" when practice officially begins on Oct. 12, said Velander.

"We have a lot more guys. Last year, I think, it was more intense in some ways because we only had nine or 10 guys. We had to prepare for the worst . . . we just didn't have as many guns."

Last year, everyone was new to Sadler. This year, a few of the players are familiar with his system. Still, there are eight new scholarship recruits, most of whom arrived over the summer.

That provided an opportunity to get to know them in a more relaxed atmosphere. "Ultimately, when you step on the floor, whether they're your best friends or not, you play together," Velander said. "You learn to work with each other. But it does help to have experience with each other, know each other's game a little bit and feed off each other's strengths because we know what those strengths are."

The veterans can help the newcomers adjust. But not every freshman has to be drawn out of a shell. "If you're outgoing, you're going to be outgoing," said Velander.

Ryan Anderson, for example. Though he was a freshman a year ago, "I learned a lot from him, just because of the way he brings a spirit of competitiveness and honesty, just being himself all the time, coming into a new situation," Velander said. "I saw a lot in him."

"A lot of the new guys have the same qualities."

So veterans can also learn from freshmen and junior college transfers.

"Like right there, a nice moonwalk," said Velander.

Ade Dagunduro had just passed by on his way to the training room to get taped. The junior college transfer moonwalked his way through the training room door.

"Exactly, a perfect example," Velander said. ■



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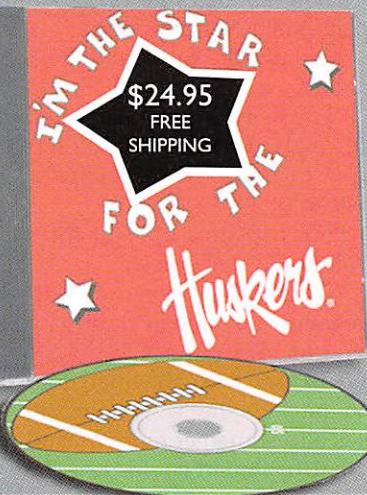
Soccer



Sophomore defender Carly Peetz (middle) is congratulated by teammates after scoring her first goal of the season in Nebraska's 1-0 victory over Oklahoma in the Big 12 opener Sept. 28 at the NU Soccer Field. (More in Notebook on page 35)

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'Take Ownership'

The pitchers had just started off, following baseball practice at Hawks Field on a late-September afternoon. "They're about to go on a 5-mile run, after a long day," coach Mike Anderson said.

Actually, the run would be only 4 miles on this particular day.

"Freeman got it," said first-year pitching coach Eric Newman, who knocked off a mile. So the pitchers would have to make only 16 trips around the warning track, instead of 20.

Four trips to a mile, or three around the concourse.

"Freeman" was Matt Freeman, a freshman right-hander from Elkhorn, Neb. At the end of practice, Newman told the pitchers he was going to pick a freshman at random, and if that freshman could describe the "wheel" pick-off move with runners at first and second, he would reduce the distance.

The description had to be perfect. And Freeman was, though he almost "screwed it up," Newman said with a laugh. "He got to right here, and he goes, 'Then I go here and I count 1,001 and then . . .'"

Newman demonstrated how Freeman paused, then turned the right way.

"Weber goes, 'It's just an involuntary twitch,'" Newman said, with another laugh.

"Weber" was Thad Weber, a senior right-hander.

Regardless of the distance, the pitchers are working harder than they've worked "in a long, long, long time. They're busting their tails," said Anderson. "Obviously, I wouldn't be critical of anything in the past. I would just say it's a different discipline. And I think it's building confidence."

That's important for a staff with limited experience. It includes 10 freshmen and redshirted freshmen, and five who pitched last season, combining for 14 of Nebraska's 32 victories.

And 10 of those 14 belonged to senior Johnny Dorn.

Six of seven drafted underclassmen signed. Weber was the only one to return. Newman knew what he was getting into with the pitching inexperience when he accepted the job. "We got a great coach who says, 'That's all right. Develop them. What a great place to be,'" Anderson said. "It's a great role to be in for him."

Newman isn't alone in dealing with youngsters. The roster lists 17 freshmen and redshirted freshmen overall, and Anderson's focus in fall practice is to get them to take ownership in the program.

He tried to make that clear from the time they stepped on campus to begin classes. He wants them to accept leadership responsibilities, and to that end, "I just flat-out told them," he said. "I've had them more in my office this year than I've ever had before, asking that young group, our new kids, to really take ownership. That's what I'm trying

to say: 'Take ownership in this program immediately.'

Not every young player understands. David Stewart, a freshman outfielder-first baseman from St. Louis, is "kind of, 'Yes sir. No sir. You bet, I'll get it done,'" said Anderson.

"Then he goes out and does that on the field. You've got a few others that are looking at you like, 'I don't really know what you're talking about.' But it's OK. It's what freshmen are."

This isn't uncharted waters, really. Anderson recalls the fall of 1998, when Will Bolt, Adam Stern and John Cole arrived as freshmen. "Those three guys showed up with their hair dyed blonde, and we had to send them back to the dorms and tell them never to come back that way," Anderson said.

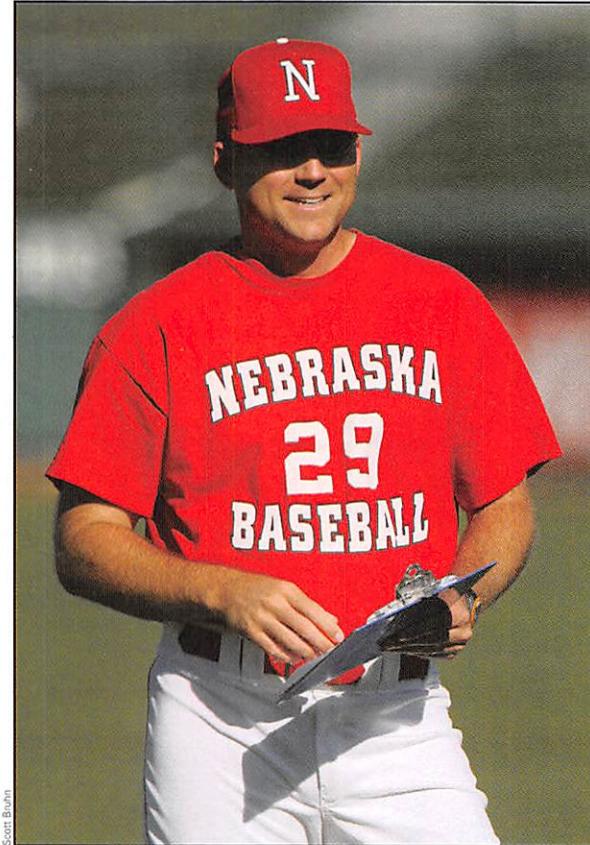
The three made mistakes, as all freshmen do. "But they were talented kids and good kids," he said. "And they worked hard for this program. It really is similar to that stage."

Nebraska advanced to the College World Series for the first time when they were juniors.

Freshmen can take leadership, as sophomore outfielder DJ Belfonte did last season.

"About halfway through the year is when I recognized I needed to put him in a leadership role," Anderson said. "We use the term leadership loosely, but if I can give them those roles and they can take them, the more power to them, the more ownership they have. DJ started doing that on the field, off the field, in recruiting; you name it. He wants this team to be great in every aspect."

Seeing young players develop is gratifying for a coach, especially in an accelerated situation such as this. "It feels



Scott Buann
Eric Newman is Nebraska's new pitching coach, after spending five years at Dallas Baptist.

like kids growing up in your family," he said. "We're close to being halfway through fall, and I'm going, 'Geeminee Christmas, we need this and this. We need more time for this.'

"But I will say this also, this is a group where there has not been one day, not one day where they haven't had great energy. So I'm very, very pleased with this group."

VETERAN LEADERSHIP, TOO

Enabling young players doesn't diminish the importance of veterans such as Dorn, Weber and Jake Opitz, a senior infielder. "Those guys want to be good, and I've already sat them down and said, 'Listen, in order for us to get where we want to be, we've got to have freshmen. We've got the high end here (veterans) and we've got the freshmen here. For this team to be good, they've got to meet your level. We can't drop down to that level,'" Anderson said. "So we've got to push the freshmen up."

NO CAPTAINS

Anderson hasn't named captains the past couple of seasons and probably won't ever again. "The captain thing isn't a concern of mine," he said. "I've said many times I learned that from Mark Marquess at Stanford. He said, 'Mike, it took me 18 years to figure that out. I stopped having captains 18 years into my program.' He says what it is, is elected leadership versus leadership that you can develop.

"You'd rather work on the development of it."

No captains doesn't mean no leadership. "You have on-the-field leadership. You've got pitching leadership. You've got practice leadership. You've got each guy in a different role," he said.

FALL ROSTER

RHP: Erik Bird (Jr.), Joe Broekemeier (RFr.), Johnny Dorn (Sr.), Matt Freeman (Fr.), Casey Hauptman (Fr.), Mike Mariot (Fr.), Mike Nesseth (RFr.), Aaron Pribanic (Jr.), Thad Weber (Sr.), Sean Yost (Fr.).

LHP: Zach Cargill (Fr.), Ryan Christensen (Fr.), Brian Feekin (RFr.), Zach Herr (Jr.), Dan Jennings (Jr.), Eric Rose (RFr.).

C: Mitch Abeita (Sr.), Drew Gray (Jr.), Joe Huwer (Fr.), Tyler Rank (Fr.).

INF: Andy Cotton (RFr.), Dan Johnston (Fr.), Ben Kline (Fr.), Jake Mort (Jr.), Jake Opitz (Sr.), Brett Sowers (RFr.), Jeff Tezak (Sr.).

OF: DJ Belfonte (So.), Clay Cuno (Jr.), Andy Gerch (Sr.), Bryce Nimmo (Sr.), David Stewart (Fr.), Nick Sullivan (Jr.).

UTL: Craig Corriston (Sr.).

Though listed on the fall roster Gerch, Tezak and Broekemeier aren't practicing. Gerch underwent shoulder surgery in August and might not play in the spring. Tezak underwent surgery for a sports hernia and Broekemeier is sidelined with a shoulder problem.

Fall practice is scheduled to end with the Red-White series Oct. 17-19.

QUICK HITS

REALLY UNDEFEATED

The No. 1-ranked Husker volleyball team swept Baylor 30-15, 30-12, 30-13 at the Coliseum in its last match in September to finish the month without dropping a game. The Huskers won nine September matches 3-0. It was the third time Nebraska has gone through September without dropping a game. The Huskers were 11-0 in September of 1995 and 7-0 in September of 1976. Going into October, Nebraska had been extended beyond three games only once, in a 3-1 victory against UCLA at the AVCA Showcase on Aug. 25 at Qwest Center Omaha.

CONFERENCE PLAY BEGINS

The Nebraska soccer team opened Big 12 play with a 1-0 victory against Oklahoma at home. The victory was the Huskers' third in a row for the season and their 12th in a row in conference openers. They have never lost a conference opener. They are 12-0, outscoring their opponents 40-5. Sophomore Carly Peetz scored the goal against Oklahoma, her first of the season, on a header in the fourth minute. Junior Selenia Iacchelli made the assist. Freshman Jessica Mills was in goal for the Huskers.

BEST SINCE 1999

Freshman Lara Crofford led the Husker women's cross country team to a fifth-place finish at the Roy Griak Invitational in St. Paul, Minn., in late September. Crofford finished 20th individually, one of three Huskers in the top 30. The team finish was Nebraska's highest at the event since 1999. Minnesota won the women's competition, followed by Arizona State, Michigan State and UC Santa Barbara.

The Husker men finished 15th at the meet, their best there since 2002.

Husker women: 20. Crofford (21:58.2); 23. Ari Goldstein (22:02.5); 28. Joslyn Dalton (22:06.2); 42. Natalja Zarcenko (22:27.8); 51. Rachel Carrizales (22:37.8); 67. Jen Pancoast (22:52.2); 144. Jen Webers (24:09.5); Elizabeth Marsh (25:47.2).

Husker men: 43. Todd Guilizia (25:38.0); 84. Peter van der Westhuizen (26:07.9); 86. Kyle Custer (26:10.9); 115. Peter Falcon (26:36.9); 122. Matt Conahan (26:43.3); 125. Vince Sickler (26:45.0); 128. Bryce Somer (26:46.9); 132. Brad Doering (26:49.2); 138. Ethan Luebbe (26:59.5); 154. Mikel Thomas (27:18.1); 163. Eric Thies (27:28.9); 188. Alec Maduza (28:24.0).



Lara Crofford

SI MENTION

Cornhusker linebacker Bo Ruud and his brother Barrett earned mention in the Oct. 1 issue of Sports Illustrated, in the Who's Hot section. "Bucs linebacker Barrett Ruud picked one off to seal a win over the Rams (he also has an NFL-high 24 tackles), while little brother Bo did the same (and returned it for a TD) as Nebraska beat Ball State."

Barrett, the leading tackler in Cornhusker history, also made the issue's "The Pop Culture Grid," noting among other things that the one thing he would refuse to eat are green beans and that nothing annoys him more than "rowers going by my condo at 6 a.m."

CAN'T PLEASE EVERYONE

Cornhusker quarterback Sam Keller doesn't have to make everyone happy. "I told Sam the only one he has to please is me. 'Don't worry about anyone else. As long as you do what we're asking you to do you'll have no problem here,'" coach Bill Callahan said recently.

"That's all I want him to focus on, to do his best job for the team and the offense, to put the ball where it needs to go. He's not let me down at all. He's learning and growing."

Keller has quickly become a team leader.

"I have a lot of confidence and belief in his abilities," said Callahan.

That confidence has been justified by Keller's play.

MORE KELLER

Keller's passing release might seem unorthodox to some but not to Callahan. "He has a real quick release. He has a very fast trigger," Callahan said. "It is smooth in my eyes. I think he has excellent accuracy, location and ball placement."

OFF TO CANADA

Keller's predecessor, 2006 Big 12 Offensive Player of the Year Zac Taylor, returned to Nebraska after being cut by the NFL's Tampa Bay Buccaneers. He was attempting to make the team as a free agent. Though he could not coach, he was a regular at practice before signing a contract with the Winnipeg Blue Bombers of the Canadian Football League on Sept. 19. ■

CROSSWORD

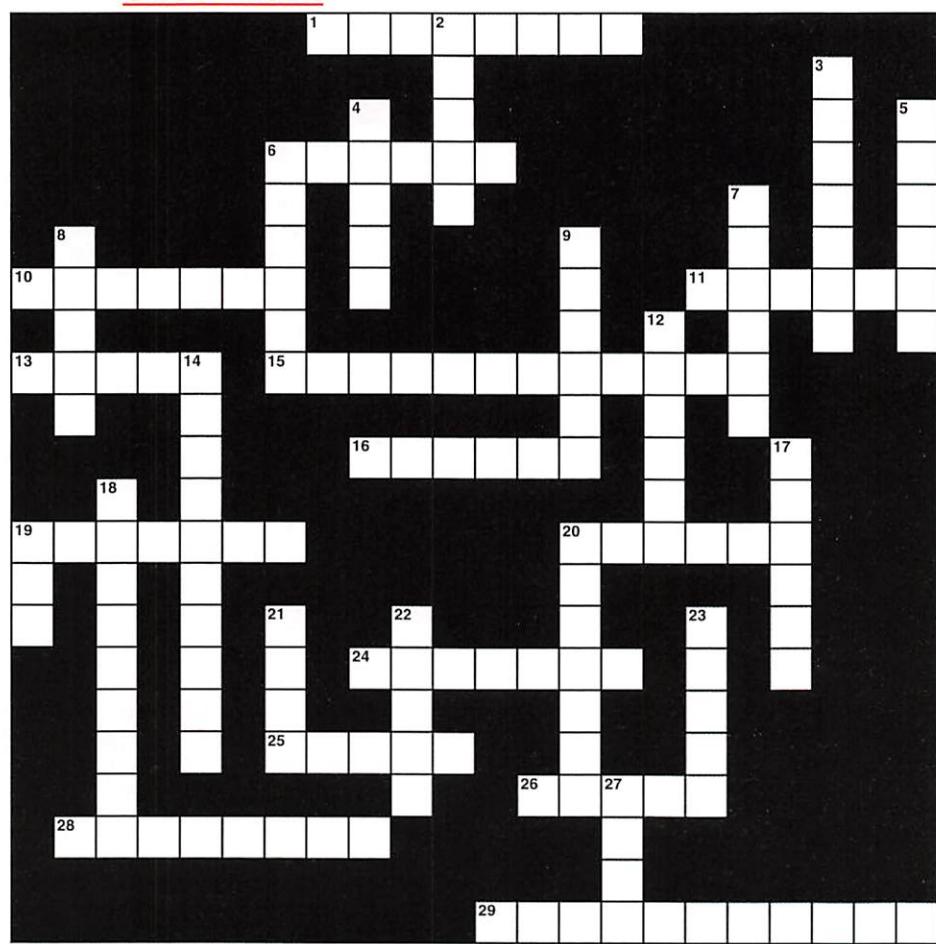
ACROSS

- 1 Larry Asante's home state
- 6 Wears No. 9 (offense)
- 10 Oklahoma State nickname
- 11 Oklahoma State color
- 13 Oct. 27 opponent
- 15 Opponent in 2008 opener
- 16 NU's 2006 bowl game
- 19 1992 Outland Trophy winner
- 20 2001 All-America guard
- 24 1994 Outland Trophy winner
- 25 Passed for NU's first TD vs. Iowa State
- 26 Wears No. 7
- 28 Ex-Husker with St. Louis Rams
- 29 Ex-Huskers with Tennessee Titans

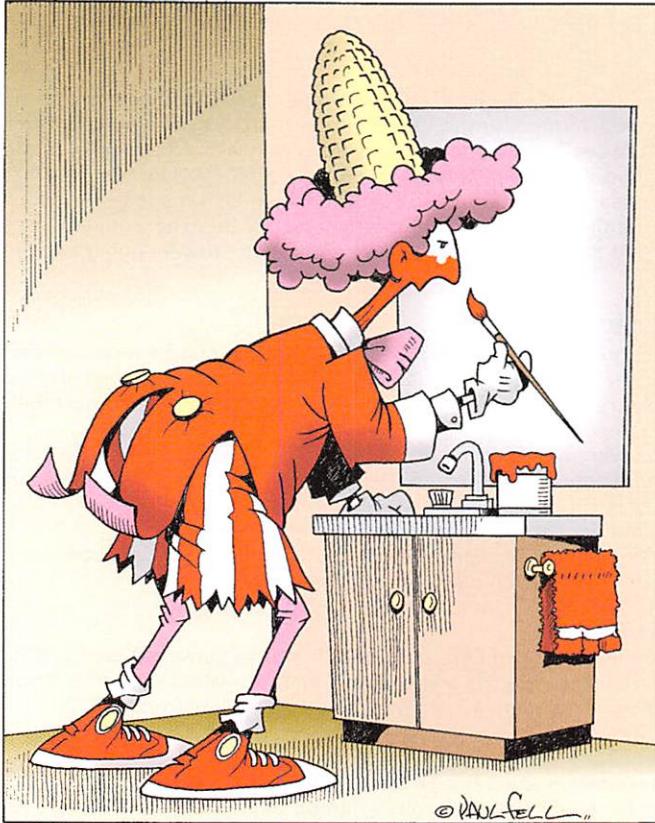
DOWN

- 2 Ex-Husker with Houston Texans
- 3 Wealthy Oklahoma State alum
- 4 NU's 2005 bowl game
- 5 2001 All-America defensive back
- 6 Nov. 3 opponent
- 7 Former NU assistant on Oklahoma State staff
- 8 Wears No. 25
- 9 Wears No. 9 (defense)
- 12 Scored 2 touchdowns vs. Iowa State
- 14 Oklahoma State campus location
- 17 Had 2 interceptions vs. Iowa State
- 18 Lydon Murtha's home state
- 19 Defensive tackle from Oregon
- 20 Armando Murillo's home state
- 21 Scored NU's first TD vs. Iowa State
- 22 Wears No. 77
- 23 Oklahoma State head coach
- 27 Leading tackler vs. Iowa State

Answers in Oct. 20 issue



HUSKERNUTZ



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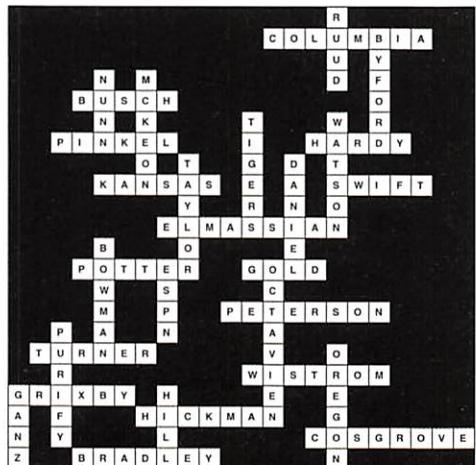
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OCT. 6 CROSSWORD SOLUTION



10 YEARS AGO . . .

Huskers Illustrated looks back at some of the top stories of 1997

**Oct. 25, 1997:
Volume 17, No. 13**

1997 MEN'S BASKETBALL PREVIEW

Determined to get back to the NCAA Tournament after a three-year exile, Nebraska will look to replace low-post force Mikki Moore with a more aggressive defense and perimeter-oriented offense.

STATE: THE WORLD NEEDS MORE LUES

What point guard Tyronn Lue lacks in NBA size, he makes up for in heart and character.

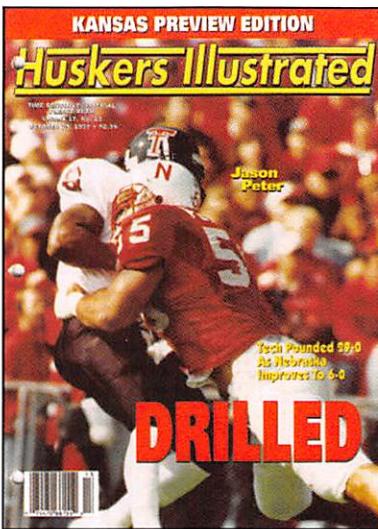
OVERVIEW: PULLING FOR A PATERNO SLIP

Nebraska has its sights set on Kansas this week, but the team will also be looking for a Penn State miscue.

HUSKERS SHAKE MONKEY, TEXAS TECH WITH 29-0 WIN

Never let it be said the Nebraska Blackshirts lack an appreciation for the Homecoming tradition. After all, they've celebrated Homecoming the past two seasons by posting shutouts.

A year ago, they blanked Baylor 49-0 in the Homecoming game — their only shutout of the season. And last Saturday afternoon, they held Texas Tech scoreless in winning 29-0,



much to the delight of a Homecoming crowd of 75,764 — and to the delight of defensive tackle Jason Peter as well.

"It feels good. It feels real good," said Peter. "We've been hoping for a shutout all season. We're all happy with the way the defense played. It's a monkey off our backs now."

"We got that shutout, and we feel good about it."

The good feelings were justified. The shutout was earned. Texas Tech took only eight offensive snaps on Nebraska's side of the 50-yard line, and the Red Raiders could get no closer to the Nebraska end zone than 36 yards. They got there on their first possession and had to settle for a 52-yard field goal attempt by Jaret Greaser. The kick went wide, and Greaser suffered a

broken right leg.

That's pretty much the way an otherwise pleasant October afternoon went for Texas Tech. "There's not a whole lot to say when you get thoroughly manhandled," Red Raider coach Spike Dykes said.

"I thought Nebraska's defense was relentless."

The statistics support such an assessment. The Red Raiders managed only 127 yards, their lowest total since 1982, and their rushing net was a paltry 17 yards. That translated into six first downs and a lot of frustration. "We just had a hard time all day with our offense," said Dykes. "We really did."

"Their defense was every bit as good as I thought they would be."

The Cornhusker defense had the offense to thank for that, according to All-America rush end Grant Wistrom . . . ■

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Only Memories

***Good plays in short supply
on 10th anniversary of remarkable moment***



**Mike
BABCOCK**

ANY HOPE OF INVOKING the past (and we're not talking about the immediate past here) quickly disappeared as Missouri took the opening kickoff and drove to a touchdown, 12 plays, 80 yards.

Less than 5 minutes into the game, the Tigers led 7-0.

Any hope of Nebraska's responding, to set the stage for an offensive shootout, quickly faded as the Cornhuskers ran three plays and punted on their first possession.

On its second possession, Missouri drove to a touchdown, 11 plays, 79 yards.

Just over 10 minutes into the game, the Tigers led 14-0.

So much for suspense. So much for a signature Nebraska victory, whatever that means. Whether or not coach Bill Callahan would get a "signature victory" was a hot topic throughout the week.

A victory of any sort would have sufficed, large, small or any size in between.

In addition to the signature-victory talk, the week included discussion of Matt Davison's catch to send the 1997 game at Faurot Field into overtime and preserve Nebraska's national title hopes.

This year's game was the 10th anniversary of that remarkable moment. And Davison did the obligatory interviews, sharing recollections of a different time and place.

During Nebraska's weekly teleconference on Tuesday, quarterback Sam Keller said he didn't know much about the series. But he knew about Davison's catch.

"Everyone has heard about that," he said. "It's a pretty big play."

Check that. It was "a pretty fantastic play," said Keller.

Good plays, much less fantastic ones, were in short supply this time. The Cornhuskers kept battling. Give them credit for that. But after the first quarter, and certainly in the second half, it was a game in search of a final score. Missouri had too much offense, no surprise there. And the Tigers' much-maligned defense stepped up.

There was a time when Nebraska had the Tigers' number, of course.

Tom Osborne's teams won 19 in a row against Missouri, and Bob Devaney's teams were 7-4.

But Missouri has always seemed something of a sleeping giant, with a strong recruiting base because of its proximity to the St. Louis and Kansas City areas. And the Tiger offense reflected that.

Tight ends Chase Coffman and Martin Rucker and wide receiver and kick returner extraordinaire Jeremy Maclin are among the in-state players who make coach Gary Pinkel's potent spread offense go.

The key to the system, however, is junior quarterback Chase

Daniel. And he's from Texas.

Two years ago, when Brad Smith was running the offense and leading Missouri to a 41-24 victory, Pinkel played Daniel early in the game, to prepare him for the time when Smith would be gone.

Last season in Lincoln, the Cornhuskers contained Daniel. They used an alignment with three down linemen, moving end Adam Carriger inside, two linebackers and six defensive backs, one of whom, true freshman Major Culbert, lined up as a "joker."

Culbert's job was to shadow Daniel, which he did well enough.

Culbert began this season as an I-back. He carried five times for 35 yards against Nevada, with 17 of the yards coming on a touchdown run. The week before the Iowa State game, he returned to defense, leading to speculation that he might reprise his role against Missouri this year. He played only on special teams.

In a quirk of symmetry, the Cornhuskers had lost by identical 41-24 scores the last two times they came to Columbia. Both times, things fell apart in the second half — in 2003, the collapse didn't come until the fourth quarter. This time, Missouri took control early and never looked back.

This time Missouri scored 41 again. But Nebraska managed only two field goals.

The Tigers even scored a touchdown on a fake field goal, adding insult to injury. Callahan was asked about the priority of using a fake field goal with the outcome decided.

"Not my concern," he said.

Nebraska once dominated this series. In the 10 games prior to 1997 and "the catch" the Cornhuskers outscored Missouri by an average of 48-10. The Tigers are now exacting long-awaited revenge.

Missouri handed Devaney his first loss as Nebraska's coach, at Lincoln in 1962. And the Tigers did the same for Osborne, at Columbia in 1973. In fact, Osborne's teams lost four of their first six games against Missouri.

But the current stretch of Missouri games here is unprecedented in the last half century or so.

Early in the week, Callahan said he was familiar with Davison's catch in 1997. "I coached Jerry Rice and Tim Brown," he said. "But Matt Davison has more notoriety than any of those all-pro receivers."

Nebraska's receivers weren't the problem on this night.

"We have to go back and regroup," said Callahan. "Anything can happen. We just have to pull together."

That was apparent early on. ■

Mike Babcock is a former sports columnist for the Lincoln Journal Star. He has covered Nebraska football for nearly 30 years. Mike can be reached at MBABCOCK1@neb.rr.com or P.O. Box 6782, Lincoln, NE 68506.

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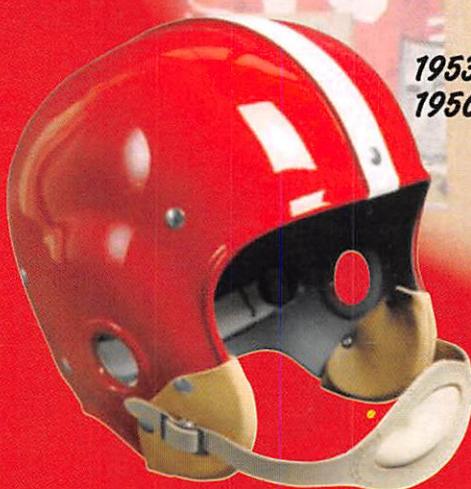
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